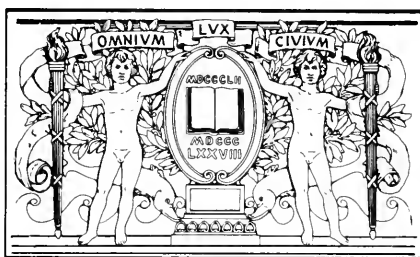


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FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT

*The Albanian Struggle
In the Old World and New*

AMS PRESS

NEW YORK

The Albanian Struggle In the Old World and New

COMPILED AND WRITTEN BY MEMBERS
OF THE FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT OF
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FOREWORD

THE FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT thanks those who have contributed to our study of the Albanians. We are grateful especially to the Albanian Historical Society, sponsor of the book, for the frequent assistance of its officers and members; and to Professor Rupert Emerson of the Department of Government at Harvard University, author of the Introduction. Mr. Efthim Natsi, one-time editor of *Kombi* and *Dielli*, has read and re-read the manuscript in the light of his intimate knowledge of the Albanian National movement; Mr. Thomas Nassi is the source of much of our comment upon Albanian music; to Mr. Peter D. Peterson, president of the Albanian Students League of Harvard University, we are indebted for a variety of facts we had not elsewhere found available. Dr. Carleton S. Coon, of Harvard's Anthropology Department, and Professor Carle C. Zimmerman of the Department of Sociology, have advised us in their respective fields, and we acknowledge the courteous interest and cooperation of the staff of the International Institute, Boston.

The Albanian Struggle, in the Old World and New has been prepared under the general direction of Dr. M. W. Royse, National Editor of Social-Ethnic Studies, and Dr. Frank Manuel, Regional Director of the Project. Mr. Charles Goldenberg, State Supervisor of Social-Ethnic Studies, was in charge of research. Among those who patiently and with enthusiasm carried on the field work, we are especially indebted to our Albanian members, Mr. Gerim Panarity and Mr. Vangel Misho. Other research workers in the State were Miss Charlotte L. Busby, Mr. Emile LaRue, Mrs. Jane K. Leary, Mrs. Emily B. Moore, Mrs. Evelyn Palmer, Mr. William Raymond, Mr. John Thornton, Mr. Ray Tucker, Mr. Edward C. Williams, and Mrs. Anabel Woogmaster. Mrs.

Helen Sullivan Mims, of the Massachusetts editorial staff, collated and edited the copy. As the staff went about their inquiries they met with generous response from many persons to whom, although for lack of space we cannot name them, we are nonetheless sincerely grateful.

Our book was in press when on April 7th newspapers ran headlines about dramatic events in Albania. The basic story has in no sense been altered; we are, however, unable to take cognizance of changes occurring after the first ten days of the month. The recurrent phrase, "the present regime," refers to the government of King Zog.

MURIEL E. HAWKS
State Director

INTRODUCTION

THE one grievance I am moved to press against *The Albanian Struggle, in the Old World and New* is that it whets my appetite for more of the same order. The Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration has rendered the double service of telling an interesting story in a direct and human fashion and at the same time of focusing the spotlight on an obscure and little known people who have hesitantly pushed their way, almost unnoticed, into the vast stream of a polyglot America.

The pleasant myth of a single and homogeneous United States—represented, perhaps, by the symbol of a shrewd but genial Uncle Sam—has been too often shattered to need further attack, but there has been a vast gap between our general sense that this is a land peopled by many races, nationalities, and creeds and our knowledge of the actual lives and ways and dreams of the peoples who have come here. There are few of us who, with the cold aid of statistical tables furnished in such volumes as the census, can picture the flesh and blood reality behind the figures. Indeed, the mere fact that we are confronted with many columns of impressive tabulations, involving hundreds of thousands, or millions, of statistical atoms of many stocks, freezes our intellects and emotions to a point where it seems almost a trivial impertinence to inquire into the lives behind the figures and to seek out what America has meant to these individual human beings and what they have meant to America.

The Albanians of Massachusetts are a small group. At best their somewhat disputed numbers run to only a few thousand, and not even the leaders of their own community would be concerned to press a claim on their behalf as having seriously influenced the life of Massachusetts, or, much less, of the United States

as a whole. It is a legitimate question to ask whether in these circumstances a study of their community, even within the unpretentious limits of the present one, was a justified project. If the question is to be answered in terms of high politics, national or international, it must certainly be conceded at the outset that the Albanians here, like their compatriots in the young Albanian state on the Adriatic, have played no world-shaking role. But if the question be taken in terms of human values, sufferings, and aspirations, the best answer, and a clearly affirmative one, is to be found in these pages.

In some strange fashion which is only hinted at in this book and which no one can wholly explain, the Albanian people have preserved through long centuries of Ottoman rule a sense of their separateness and identity. Particularly considering the diversity of their religions—the element primarily serving to divide the communities within the Ottoman Empire—and the fact that a majority of them were Mohammedans, it is all the more surprising that there survived among them the feeling of constituting a people apart, whose ancient traditions entitled them, once the national idea had belatedly penetrated to their secluded mountains, to an autonomous or independent existence.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century a few stragglers wandered away from this simple and primitive community to try their fortunes in the new and prosperous land across the sea. They were followed by others until a small business grew up of luring Albanians into the still expanding factories of New England, to help meet the demand for a continuous flow of cheap, docile, unskilled labor. Here the Albanian immigrants found neither streets paved with gold nor a great melting pot which welcomed them and turned them speedily into American patriots. Their numbers multiplied and some of them forged slightly ahead in the hard drive to make a living, but they still formed an isolated and almost unsuspected community, living a life of drudgery and privation, dreaming dreams of a recreated motherland. Torn from their villages and the close-knit pattern of their

lives at home and thrust into the turmoil of an alien world of whose language and ways they were wholly ignorant, they came for the first time to an effective recognition that they belonged to a larger national community with a claim on its own rights and dignity in the world.

Perhaps the most interesting single facet of the story which this book tells is the effect of transplantation to America, at least in its earlier stages, in greatly intensifying the national consciousness of the Albanian immigrants, in stimulating their interest in Albanian culture and traditions, and in paving the way for their active participation in the struggle for Albanian independence. Instead of becoming Americans and taking part in American political and social movements, they became conscious Albanians, founding an Albanian press and establishing for the first time an autonomous national church. The Balkan struggles for national unity and independence came with them to the United States, and the Albanian worker lived in a self-imposed poverty even greater than that which his meager earnings imposed upon him, either sending his wages home, hoarding them against the day of his return, or using them to further the national cause. He sought vicariously abroad the restoration of that dignity and fruition of life which seemed denied him in the mechanized and alien circle of his life in Massachusetts.

This Albanian concentration on the affairs of the Old Country is by no means a single and peculiar phenomenon—the influence of the Irish and the Czechoslovaks in this country and of the overseas Chinese throughout the world in furnishing leadership, mass support, and funds for the national movements in their own countries is common knowledge. It is a fascinating commentary on the civilization of the United States that we should have here, almost utterly unknown to the people among whom they live and work, little groups of devoted adherents to causes even the names of which often carry no meaning to the rest of us.

Nor is the latter part of the story of less absorbing interest. The Albanian national movement and revolution was successful,

and the dreams of the *émigrés* seemed to have come true. But the land to which they returned failed to materialize as the one toward which their visions had been directed. Perhaps more of the spirit of American democracy and liberty had entered into them than they themselves were aware. At all events, the disillusioned among them have drifted back to this country, now bringing with them the wives and children who formerly had waited in Albania for their men to return. There is a difference in this second coming to America. Beyond the first coming in the few decades before the World War there lay the horizon of a freed Albania which would welcome back its wandering sons and restore these aliens in a strange land to their own people. The second coming, after Albania is freed but still unfree, is with heavier hearts: here are people cast adrift between two worlds, neither returning to an America which is their own nor sustained by the hope of a promised land still to be built. Now, it seems, the ties which bind them to America are gradually becoming stronger, but the harsh slum America which has been the bulk of their experience has done little to win them over.

I can only hope that the Writers' Project will continue to use its unparalleled resources to open up to us the lives of these many peoples from which a new America is continually being forged.

RUPERT EMERSON

Harvard University
March, 1939.

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CHAPTER I

SONS OF THE EAGLE

IN MARCH 1938 three Albanian princesses, sisters of King Zog, included Boston, Worcester, and Southbridge, Massachusetts, as important stations in the itinerary of their American visit. While the young ladies were being photographed for the rotogravure sections of metropolitan newspapers, the people of the Commonwealth for the first time became aware of the Albanian settlement in their midst. Some were surprised to learn that the 10,000 Albanians in this state formed the largest settlement in the country. Inquiry made it increasingly apparent that events in contemporary Albania were closely intertwined with the lives of Massachusetts Albanians. The activities of this small colony, carried on outside the normal focus of our newspapers, had, it seems, become an integral part of the history of modern Albania, with curious ramifications into world politics.

Prior to 1912 few of us knew what manner of men Albanians were or even where Albania was. Except for chance remembrance of a tale in Byron's *Childe Harold* or a picture in a geography book, the country was vaguely identified in our minds as a tiny province of the Ottoman Empire somewhere in the Balkans. It was a geographic expression and nothing more. If you had ever encountered a newly arrived Albanian peasant and questioned him about "Albania," his puzzlement might have equaled yours. In their homeland his people called themselves *Shqipetare*—Sons of the Eagle—and their country was *Shqipëria*—the Land of the Eagle. Three centuries before Christ, Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, had first dubbed them "Sons of the Eagle" to characterize their swiftness in battle, and they were loath to

abandon the proud traditional title. The name "Albania," in common usage in the Western World, is of much more recent origin. Robert Guiscard, the Norman crusader who in the eleventh century had invaded central Albania, is said to be responsible for its adoption. When he and his followers established themselves in the town of Elbasan, they found the name difficult to pronounce and corrupted it to "Albania."

Estimates of the number of Albanians in Massachusetts might bewilder the most serious census official. In 1907 the publisher of the first Albanian newspaper in the United States made a canvass of his countrymen and found about seven hundred in Boston, four hundred in Worcester, four hundred in Southbridge, and two hundred in Natick. The Federal Census of 1910, however, could report no more than 625 Albanians in the whole Commonwealth. Since Albania was officially part of the Turkish Empire, there were difficulties about identifying an Albanian. Many Sons of the Eagle had been forced to abandon their native land in search of work in neighboring Rumania, Bulgaria, and Greece; when they left these Balkan countries to try their luck in America, immigration officials did not trace them back to their place of birth. They were rarely considered a distinct national group in United States government classifications, which listed them as Turks or Greeks in Europe. Only with the aid of living records, the testimony of the Albanians in this state, has it been possible to reconstruct their story.

The Massachusetts colony is only one of many Albanian colonies in the United States. There are perhaps eighteen thousand Sons of the Eagle, including American-born children, scattered through New England. Manchester and Concord in New Hampshire, and Pawtucket, Rhode Island, have old Albanian settlements; many shoe and textile towns of Maine draw upon the labor of Albanian families. Albanian businessmen have taken root in Bridgeport, Hartford, and Waterbury, Connecticut. Before the war, except for a few isolated enclaves in the interior—at Jamestown, New York, in St. Louis, in Seattle—the Albanians

were concentrated in New England and New York City. The impact of the war, with its mushrooming industries, stimulated a new diaspora. Westward, through Pennsylvania, to Chicago, to Detroit, wandered Albanians, lured by visions of higher wages. When they found their dreams fulfilled, or when their money ran out, they halted. In later years, many of the Albanian groups thus established disappeared. Some became the nuclei of larger colonies. All told, the Albanian population of the United States probably numbers between 35,000 and 60,000, many of whom are, of course, American-born children of immigrants; 40,000 is a conservative estimate. If Albanians who hailed from Italy and Greece were included, the figure would be somewhat higher.

Yet the main currents of the story of the Albanians in the United States may be followed in the Massachusetts annals of this people. It was in Boston that their organizations took root. To Boston came Albanian emissaries from overseas with messages for American compatriots. From Boston were sent those earnest, labored cablegrams by which American Albanians aspired to influence the Near Eastern policy of Sir Edward Grey and other potentates no less august. On a more homely plane, the pattern of Albanian life throughout industrial America differs little from its Massachusetts prototype. In all American cities these children of a backward Near Eastern civilization have encountered the same strains and stresses, made the same painful adjustments. Massachusetts, which received the first pioneers and has kept the largest concentration, is the focal point of their history in the New World.

* * * * *

*Who opened America may his soul shine and shine;
A fellow from Korcha and one from Katundi may their
souls shine and shine.*

Thus have Albanians expressed their gratitude to the first two of their compatriots who came to America. The man from the city of Korcha arrived in 1876, but he soon left for the Argentine.

More important was the man from Katundi, who settled in Massachusetts in 1886 and is still there, the venerable old priest Nicholas Christopher. Before he was ordained in 1917 he had a varied career in this state, trying his hand at factory work and banana peddling in search of a living. This was the man who carried the vision of America back to Albania. He made a number of trips to his homeland and each time he returned to Massachusetts a few friends or relatives were brought along. In this way it came about that the first ten Albanians in the United States all hailed from the same village, Katundi. By 1900 there were no more than forty-two Albanians in Massachusetts; but with the frequent visits of Christopher and others after him, news of the "discovery" of America spread far and wide through the little Ottoman province.

A number of Albanians returned to their native village dressed in western clothes, *alla franga*, boasting unheard-of wealth. According to American standards, the tales of their opulence were much exaggerated, but in Albania the former immigrants were looked upon as men of fortune. Stories were repeated that so and so, from this or that town, had just returned from America with fabulous riches. The imagination of the native peasants was kindled by the receipt of weekly or monthly letters, with foreign exchange checks enclosed, from relatives abroad. In the local store and in the blacksmith shop, village news peddlers would gather to discuss the grand possibilities awaiting young, healthy men in the new country. Gossips would report "actual cases" of compatriots who had accumulated huge sums of money by selling flowers. To Albanians who lived poverty-stricken in the midst of a natural efflorescence of roses and wild flowers, it seemed amazing that in another country one could grow rich from these blooms. "In America there is much money for those who would travel many miles over the water to seek fortune," trickled the report through the valleys of southern Albania.

Sagas of returned natives aroused the enthusiasm of Albanian youths. But how should they ever get to this "land behind the

sun?" Wretched living conditions had driven many of them to emigrate before, though no farther than nearby Greece, Bulgaria, or Rumania. The equivalent of a few American dollars had usually sufficed to send an Albanian across the border to try his prospects in another Balkan state. Sailing to America cost more than *fifty* dollars!

Early groups of immigrants were dependent for traveling expenses upon the money of friends and relatives already in America. But after 1905 commercial interests were organized to foster the desire to emigrate and to profit from it. Steamship companies sent agents from one town to another, advertising in the local store, nerve center of the community, a combination department store, tavern, gambling house, and post office. The storekeeper, often the only literate person in town, became a sub-agent of the steamship companies, making all necessary arrangements for the emigrants. When the American government imposed new restrictions on the importation of foreign labor, the news was quickly transmitted by the steamship companies to their agents, enabling them to instruct the emigrants in the most effective methods of evading the regulations. Thus, although the immigration law of 1907 forbade alien labor's coming to this country on borrowed money, at least ninety-five per cent of the Albanians who entered the United States in the first years of the twentieth century were dependent upon the "bounty" of money-lenders in their native villages. Very few were ever detected and sent back. The village sub-agent of the steamship company carefully coached each emigrant, so that when questioned about money matters at Ellis Island he would be quick to answer that "it was his own money." A minor was taught to say that money had been sent him by his father who had already settled in the United States. Meticulous arrangements were made to have some stranger pose as the youngster's parent before the immigration officials. If the bogus relative could not identify his supposed son, brother, or nephew, the unfortunate immigrant was deported.

Financing a young man's voyage to America became a flourishing enterprise, with all the aspects of a small town "racket." Money-lenders coupled their activities with the systematic propaganda of the steamship companies encouraging Albanian youths to break away from the Old Country. Since Turkey was reluctant to allow young men of military age to leave the land, the town money-lender and the steamship agent bribed local officials, facilitating the exodus. Exorbitant rates of interest were charged for a short term; the bribe to government officials was added to the price of the steamship ticket. Rarely was the money-lender left in the lurch. Any land owned by the emigrant was kept as security and the bond was made doubly sure by co-signers. Where there were Albanian settlements in the United States, the money-lenders appointed agents to assure the collection of their loan. At times the agents even resorted to blackmail, threatening to inform the frightened immigrant's employer about the debt. Payment for the steamship ticket became the all-absorbing problem of the immigrant as soon as he landed.

The largest Albanian colonies in Massachusetts were established during the first two decades of the twentieth century, most of the pioneers coming from Korcha and a district in its vicinity known as Vakefet. Though a number of Albanian immigrants sailed directly to Boston, the majority first landed at New York, then moved on to New England, seeking employment. The newcomer usually settled in the town where he had a friend or a relative. Occupational possibilities were limited. Most of the immigrants were peasants with little experience other than working the soil. In the United States it was difficult for them to take up farming because it required capital and meant permanent settlement. They had come here without families, intending to save money and to return to the Old Country, where they would buy themselves a piece of land or new tools to improve the land they already possessed. They never intended making America a permanent home.

The uneducated peasant immigrants turned to textile mills,

shoe factories, and metal works, where unskilled labor could find a place; hotels and restaurants employed the younger and more docile elements in menial capacities. Most of the immigrants settled in Boston and Worcester because of the varied opportunities for factory work. The American Optical Company, in search of cheap labor, enticed a good-sized group to Southbridge. Framingham, Fitchburg, Lynn, Peabody, Brockton, and Natick attracted Albanians to their shoe factories. At one time hundreds of Albanians, mostly Mohammedans, were employed in the textile mills of New Bedford, forming the largest Mohammedan Albanian colony in the state. But work in these mills was the least desirable occupation. As one oldtimer expressed it, "No sooner did a friend begin working in that cotton textile factory than he developed a hacking cough from the irritation of the cotton dust. Of course, I told him to leave that factory at once and come over to the shoe factories. We spread the warning among our compatriots that those who worked in the textile factories would sooner or later contract lung diseases. I think that on the whole we managed to steer clear of the textile factories."

An Albanian immigrant working as a mill hand about 1910 earned anywhere from three to ten dollars a week. The average wage was about thirty dollars a month. Immigrants proudly wrote home to their relatives that they were being paid eight napoleons a month, a phenomenal wage for a person who, if he had remained at home, would have been hired out for his keep, receiving only three or four dollars a year in cash. Working days in America were long, ten to twelve hours—but it didn't matter; Albanians had been used to laboring from sunrise to sunset in the Old Country. If the foreman was favorably disposed towards them and asked them to work overtime at the same rate of pay, they grasped at the chance. Anyone who got the overtime was considered "lucky," and the immigrant often curried favor—and more overtime—with his straw boss by offering petty bribes.

To save money on rent, men crowded together in tenements in the slums. Ten or fifteen men often lived together in a single

flat, the *konak*. Existence in the *konak* was drab. In the homeland Albanians had been accustomed to an outdoor life; here they were cramped within the four walls of the most dilapidated houses in the worst slum areas of America's mill towns. After a long stretch at the work bench or the loom, they returned in the evening to dreary, cold tenements. Since there were no women, the immigrants had to clean the flat and cook their own meals. Different members took turns in the kitchen. Besides cooking, they washed and mended their own clothes and repaired their own shoes.

Since they had come to America to make money and save it, they kept to a frugal diet. Breakfast consisted of coffee and bread; dinner in the mill, of bread and coffee or perhaps milk; supper, of the least expensive meat, cooked with dry beans or rice. Fat was used for frying purposes because it was cheap. Weekly living expenses on this scale, rent included, amounted to about a dollar per person.

Winter was hardest for them. In the long evening they found some diversion in stuffy coffee-houses reeking with smoke, where they sat about for hours, drinking black Turkish coffee and playing cards. Summer wasn't so bad. Days were longer and the immigrants had more time for themselves. After supper they would go to nearby parks and chat about life in the homeland. On Sundays they would take food to the woods and spend the day picnicking.

The older members were bankers for the *konaks*. Wages were turned over to them for safekeeping and placed in a *kemer*, a large money-pouch worn close to the flesh. No one ever thought of taking his money to a regular bank; such institutions had not existed in the Old Country, and the immigrant distrusted them. If someone needed money the elder would decide whether the purpose was a worthy one before he opened his *kemer*. The elders, always respected, patched up quarrels among the younger men and acted generally as advisers.

A cheering aspect of life in the *konak* was its spirit of friendli-

ness and comradeship. The members helped one another, took care of their sick, and found work for their jobless. When a newcomer was being pressed by the money-lender back home, his companions in the *konak* often chipped in whatever they could. Not infrequently an unemployed member of the *konak* was not charged for board when weekly accounts were settled on Sunday. A stranger who came to the *konak* paid no board for the first week.

This miserable existence undermined the health of the immigrants. When they finally returned to the homeland with their treasure they were often too feeble to enjoy the delights which they had promised themselves. Albanians first landing in America were wiry and rugged, with ruddy weatherbeaten complexions. After working in American factories of the first decades of the twentieth century, and after living in their *konaks*, which, they said, were often no better than *konets* (dog kennels), their faces lost color, their bodies became emaciated. In illness the Albanians begrudged themselves the expenditure of a doctor's fee, and they would often hesitate to summon medical aid until it was too late. One elderly Albanian philosophically reflected on their way of life, "We wedded ourselves to folly, and thereby became fools."

The Albanian, coming from a semi-feudal Balkan country to highly industrialized Massachusetts, was not prepared to struggle for existence in the New World. On all sides he was handicapped by limitations in training and equipment. In crossing the Atlantic he seemed suddenly to be spanning centuries of economic and social development. Only a knowledge of the history of his native land can afford an insight into the peculiar problems which confronted him. The Albanian immigrant to America was not only facing a complete shift in environment, he was actually being projected from one epoch of civilization to another.

* * * * *

In 1900 the territory now included in the independent state of

Albania was a Balkan province of the Turkish Empire, faced on the north and east by what is now Yugoslavia, and on the south by Greece. From the marshy lowlands and brackish streams of the south, it stretched northward through rugged mountains and fertile valleys to the Albanian Alps. Although the whole country is little larger than the state of Massachusetts, its coastline renders it of strategic importance to neighbors on both sides of the Adriatic. At the beginning of the century, as today, the racial community of Albanians overflowed the political boundaries of the state. While there are about a million inhabitants in present-day Albania, there are perhaps a million and a half more Albanians scattered outside. About 800,000 live among the Serbs in the Kossovo valley and adjacent territory; about 300,000 in southern Italy and Sicily; and an additional 400,000 in Greece.

Despite their vague national tradition and their long submergence in the Turkish Empire, the Albanians have always considered themselves a separate ethnic group. Moreover, they believe that as direct descendants of the ancient Illyrians they represent the oldest inhabitants of the Balkan peninsula. The Illyrian tribes have left only meager records. A northern people, they seem to have settled during the Iron Age over a wide area of the Balkan peninsula. Just before the World War an Italian expedition unearthed an Iron Age site, presumably of Illyrian origin, near Puka in northern Albania. It is known that from the death of Hyllus, Illyrian King of the thirteenth century B. C., until 167 B. C., the Illyrian Kingdom included northern and central Albania. During those centuries, southern Albania comprised the district which the Greeks called Epirus, or the mainland. From 1270 B. C. it had been inhabited by Epirote tribes and formed part of the kingdom of Molossia, whose rulers claimed direct descent from Pyrrhus, son of Achilles. As the great waves of conquest and tribal migration succeeded each other, the Illyrians were pushed out of their vast holdings in the Balkan peninsula, and were gradually confined to the moun-

tain strongholds of northern Albania. There they remained during the centuries when Celts, Romans, Huns, and Slavs were taking possession of the Balkan peninsula and laying the foundations for later Balkan nationalities.

Although the force of the invasions tended to compress Illyria and Epirus together, something of the ancient distinction between the two groups has been preserved to the present day. The River Shkumbi divides Albania into two communities. To the north, where the almost impenetrable mountains provided a retreat from invaders and carriers of civilization, live the belligerent Ghegs, descendants of early Illyrians. In the lower lands of the south live the Tosks, of Epirote origin. Subjected for centuries to the mellowing touch of Byzantine culture, the Tosks have lost some of their primitive temper. They have always formed the more industrious section of the population, while the Gheg has preferred to spend his time shining his gun, chatting with his fellows about his soldierly prowess, and displaying his flair for artistic dress. Ghegs and Tosks speak dialects so different that they sometimes find it difficult to understand each other. Both dialects, however, derive from a distinct Albanian tongue, unique in the Indo-European group of languages because it is the only one which has preserved traces of the ancient Illyrian speech of the Balkan peninsula. Perhaps thirty per cent of the words in the language can be called pure Albanian. About fifty per cent have been taken over from the Latin, while the remaining twenty per cent are Greek, Slavic, Turkish, or even Italian. Like members of other diminutive language communities, many male Albanians have traditionally learned one or two other languages. This helps to account for the medley of roots and the high percentage of imported words.

The predominant religion among both Tosks and Ghegs is Mohammedanism, for, as soon as Albania had been subdued by the Ottomans, the landholding classes found it expedient to accept the religion of their conquerors, and most people of the lower classes followed their example. In the south, however, a

minority refused to forsake the Greek Orthodox Church. Theirs was the usual fate of religious dissenters in the Mohammedan Empire: they were allowed to practice their own faith, but became a "subject people," discriminated against economically and penalized socially. In the north the religious minority which refused to accept Islamism was Roman Catholic. The Roman Church had been embraced by the Ghegs as a means of offsetting the influence of the Serbs, who belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church. The Serbs had conquered the Gheg country in the seventh century and had remained there until they were expelled by an Albanian prince, Balsha, about six hundred years later. Determined to sever all ties with the former overlord and still dangerous neighbor, Balsha abandoned the Greek Church for the Roman. Thus Roman Catholicism became entrenched in northern Albania, and survived, among a minority, throughout the period of Turkish domination. Undoubtedly it helped keep alive a sense of national or cultural separateness on the northern frontier of Albania, where the Gheg country touches the land of the Serbs.

The Turks conquered Albania only after a bitter struggle—a struggle that gave the defeated people their historic epic, and their greatest national moment prior to the twentieth century. For the space of twenty-four years, while the most powerful rulers of Europe looked on, the Ottoman hordes were baffled by the military genius of the Albanian Catholic, Scanderbeg. In 1463, when Pope Pius II tried to organize a crusade against the Turks, Scanderbeg was universally regarded as the natural leader. But Pius II died before his plan ripened. In a few years Scanderbeg also died, and Albanian resistance to the Turk was broken. Outside of Albania, Scanderbeg became an obscure historical figure, whose exploits were occasionally retold by romantic poets like Longfellow. Within Albania, however, he has remained for over four centuries a great national legend. Many of the Albanian immigrants to America brought his portrait across the seas. The memory of this renowned chieftain in time became one of the

mainsprings feeding national aspirations. The story of his career is worth telling.

Scanderbeg (the Turkish name given to George Castriota) was the son of a central Albanian prince, whom the Turks had appointed provincial governor. At the age of eleven he was taken from his home as a hostage and sent by Sultan Mohammed I (1413-1421) to the training school of the Janissaries. There he was converted to Mohammedanism. Having displayed outstanding military talent, he was early raised to the rank of captain. While he was still very young, his fame had spread as far as Venice; the representatives of the Venetian Senate, planning war against the sultan, interceded with Scanderbeg's father to prevent his son from fighting along with the Janissaries.

Eventually the Albanians began to realize that Scanderbeg's military genius might offer the possibility of a successful revolt against Turkish domination. He was approached for this purpose in 1438, after a spirited but poorly organized revolt by a group of south Albanian princes had been mercilessly crushed. The north Albanians, fearing their turn was next, sent a deputation to Scanderbeg and begged him to take over the leadership of their forces. Scanderbeg, however, during his long association with the Turks, had grasped some of the subtleties of Oriental intrigue. Perhaps the emissaries were in the pay of the sultan and were testing his loyalty. He waited. For many years he had had an understanding with the sultan that he should succeed his father as governor of Albania. When Prince John died in 1442, Scanderbeg confidently expected to take over the post. Instead, the sultan assigned it to a Turk. At this juncture Scanderbeg determined to take up the cause of the Albanians against the Turks.

With a strategic finesse worthy of his Turkish masters, he gave no intimation of his decision until a fitting opportunity arrived. In 1443, the sultan's forces met the Hungarians under Huniades at the battle of Nish. Scanderbeg at that time was second in command of the sultan's troops; he was at the height

of his popularity with the Turkish army. Whether or not he conspired with the Hungarians, as is generally believed, the Turks were defeated. As the tide turned against the Turks, Scanderbeg seized the sultan's secretary and extorted a written *firman* appointing himself governor of Albania. With the commission safely in his pocket, he sped to his native land. There he reverted to the faith of his ancestors.

During the next twenty-four years he won victory after victory over the huge Turkish armies which the sultans gathered from every corner of their vast domains. He accomplished his feats with a small army recruited from quarrelsome Albanian feudal lords and unruly tribesmen. Only unusual qualities of leadership could have molded such a naturally discordant mass into a unified fighting column. Keeping the Janissaries in mind as a model, Scanderbeg picked his men by hand from the entire Albanian population. A census had been prepared, listing all Albanians eligible for active military life, and Scanderbeg traveled from town to town to direct the work. The 8,000 cavalrymen and 7,000 infantrymen whom he selected were trained to move with birdlike swiftness. Students of Scanderbeg believe he must have used a small, fleet breed of horses that no longer exists in Albania. With its lengthening chain of successes, his army developed a feeling of contemptuous superiority over the Turkish "cows," as they were accustomed to describe their adversaries. Two of Turkey's most able sultans, Murad II and Mohammed II, the hero of Constantinople, came to grief when they led campaigns against Scanderbeg. People were soon convinced that no one in the Ottoman Empire, or in Europe, had the wit to cope with Scanderbeg in the mountains and forests of Albania.

In 1459 Scanderbeg concluded a ten-year truce with Sultan Mohammed II. This left him free to go to the assistance of his friend Ferdinand of Naples, who was beleaguered by Angevin forces at Bari, Italy. With the help of Scanderbeg's crack cavalry, Ferdinand soon routed the besiegers. New glory was shed upon Scanderbeg's name. So impressed were the Angevins, it is said,

that they soon discarded their heavy medieval equipment for Scanderbeg's light armor. In Italy Scanderbeg became a legendary hero; as chronicles of the period show, the story of the Albanian "and his 600 horsemen" was passed on from father to son.

In Albania, Scanderbeg, even before his death in 1467, had become a myth. Traditionally minded Albanians of later generations looked upon him as a model to be emulated. However often retold, tales of his levantine intrigue and diplomatic subtlety filled his compatriots with pride. Even the shadier aspects of his exploits have on occasion been gleefully recounted by commemorators of his legend. For some of Scanderbeg's practices could not be too clearly differentiated from those of the mountain brigand. He had a bit of the Robin Hood in his makeup. Sometimes, when his army was in need of supplies, the peasantry of the countryside had to make involuntary sacrifices. One story pictures a group of Albanian soldiers gathering in camp after a foraging excursion to neighboring villages and farms. As they brought in their newly acquired stocks of oxen, cows, horses, and clothing, they exchanged quips and banter. "If Ali Pasha (the Turkish general) were to peep at us," the legend quotes one soldier as saying, "would he not burst or go mad to know he was being defeated by a band of brigands?" But the Albanian peasantry, who were the unsung victims of such tales, were eventually to see Scanderbeg's name invoked in their behalf. In the twentieth century, when Albania began to feel the rumblings of Balkan agrarian movements, it was remembered that Scanderbeg too had had his controversies with the Albanian nobles and had punished them by appropriating some of their holdings.

Devotedly as they treasured Scanderbeg's name, the Albanians lost his spirit of revolt against the Turks. The Albanian rebellion died with Scanderbeg, not to reappear for more than four centuries. Scanderbeg himself, at the time of his death, felt that there was no Albanian capable of preserving the country's independence against Islam. He therefore bequeathed the land to the Republic of Venice, trusting the prosperous Venetian merchants

and craftsmen to withstand pressure from the East. But the power of the Maritime Republic was already waning. Its feeble efforts to check the advance of the Turks, flushed with their recent conquest of Constantinople, were to no avail. One by one the Albanian princes surrendered their lands to the Turk. Some of them fled to Italy; others remained and accepted the Mohammedan faith. By 1520, when Sulaiman the Magnificent succeeded to the sultanate, the whole of Albania had fallen under Turkish domination.

The pace of change, never rapid in the Near East under Turkish rule, was even slower in Albania than elsewhere. In 1900, just before the main flow of Albanian immigration to America, Albania was a remote, mountainous corner of the Ottoman Empire, a land of outworn customs and apathetic poverty. Economically it had advanced as far, perhaps, as seventeenth century Europe. It employed the same primitive methods of agriculture; it was ruled by a similarly decadent feudal caste. Drove of highwaymen and brigands roamed the country unmolested. Human life was held in slight regard. A visit to a distant town was an adventure hazarded only by the fully armed. Armed or not, the traveler could hardly feel secure, for resistance to a band of outlaws familiar with every pass along the main highways was more than likely to prove futile.

The rulers of the province, the men who received the lion's share of what little wealth it had, were the beys, or landed nobility. Contrary to general belief both among Albanians and foreigners, Albanian feudalism was established not by the Turks but by Crusaders who halted in Albania in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. When the Turks overran the peninsula, Albania was the only Balkan country with this system. The Turkish sultans themselves had the typical aversion of despots to feudal rivals, and had they been powerful enough, they would probably have crushed the Albanian lords. But the Turks had never really subdued Albania. As an English traveler of the late nineteenth century remarked in his book *A Winter in Albania*, "In

their bare rock fastnesses they have set civilization at defiance, and it will require a stronger hand than the Turk's to tame them." In dealing with the Albanian feudal system, the Turks adopted a policy of *laissez faire*, so long as that system did not threaten the rest of the empire. The beys, on their side, showed an appropriate measure of tractability. They accepted Islamism and acknowledged the nominal suzerainty of the sultan. In return, they were allowed to keep arms; and by organizing their peasants into little bands, they were able to run Albania very much as they pleased. It was unlikely that any well-intentioned sultan should hear of their misdeeds, for they usually succeeded in capturing the key positions through which information might reach the Sublime Porte. Sometimes they went so far as to violate the tacit agreement with the Turks; powerful beys like Ali Pasha in south Albania and Kara Mahmut Pasha of the northern house of Bushati were able to defy the sultans. More frequently, they managed by amicable intrigue to win high posts in the imperial government. In this way, Albanian beys on occasion controlled the destinies of the Turkish Empire.

At the beginning of the present century the whole of Albania was dominated by about a dozen outstanding families, most of whom derived their names from the towns where they had their seats of authority. In south Albania were the Beys of Valona, who, although they owned little land, enjoyed enormous influence, since nearly all members of the family held important offices in the empire. Also in south Albania lived the family of Kelsura, reputedly the most cruel beys since Ali Pasha Tepeleni. The Beys of Vriani had immense holdings in the Muzekia valley, potential granary of Albania. Frasheri was the seat of another powerful family, most of whose members unfortunately bore little resemblance to the literary brothers of that name. The Beys of Kiafezezi, Kolonia, Deshnitsa, and Polena had most of their holdings outside the frontiers of Albania proper, although they also owned land in the towns from which they derived their titles.

Central Albania was controlled by four families, those represented by Shefket Verlatsi, Akif Pasha, Dervish Bey, and the Top-tani family, the last of which dominated the territory comprised in present-day Tirana. In the extreme north were the great Bushati house and the family of Prenk Bib Doda, leader of the Roman Catholic tribes. The Mati district was controlled by Djemal Pasha, father of King Zog.

Of these beys the most formidable at the beginning of the twentieth century were Ismail Kemal Bey, Essad Pasha Toptani, and Prenk Bib Doda, all three now dead. Each of them had a large following, and in his own section was an autocrat whose prestige reached even beyond the borders of Albania. A story apocryphal but to the point is told about an incident that occurred in 1914, when the German Prince William of Wied arrived in Albania to begin his six months' rule in the recently created kingdom. The Prince of Wied, according to the tale, approached Prenk Bib Doda and anxiously inquired about conditions in Albania. Bib Doda cynically replied, "Your Highness, if you expect to succeed in my country, you must bring with you three bullets, one for Ismail Kemal Bey, one for Essad Pasha Toptani, and one for me."

A few of the beys not only enjoyed great power but had genuine claims to distinction. Houses could point to a member or two who had cast glory on the family name in war or in diplomacy. The Bushati family, in particular, maintained a tradition of bravery and lived up to a high code of honor. Ismail Kemal Bey, a relative of Ferid Pasha who for many years was Grand Vizier of Turkey, later became the George Washington of Albanian independence. Distinguished men had sprung also from the Top-tani line. On the whole, however, the beys were cruel, shiftless, and degenerate. Local tyrants who used what energy they had to exploit and terrorize their peasants, they treated the Mohammedan lower classes as badly as they did the Christians. But they could hardly be expected to care for their peasants when they were slovenly in the conduct of their own affairs. A story about

one of the Vrioni beys, Azis Pasha, illustrates the carelessness of members of his caste. This bey once happened to hire a capable secretary to take charge of his estates. Nothing had been said about the secretary's salary; and after several months had passed, the secretary, now desperate, decided to broach the subject to his lord. The pasha was genuinely surprised. "You expect me to pay you?" he asked. "Why, yes," replied the secretary, "I have a family to support and I cannot work for nothing." The pasha thought for a moment. Then he said, "You have all my wealth in your hands. Why don't you help yourself?" Secretaries of a more conniving turn of mind not infrequently found it possible to manipulate most of their master's wealth into their own hands.

The arrogance of the bey was proverbial. Seldom consorting with cultivated people, he fancied himself the repository of all the talents. If he wrote two verses he posed as a great man of letters. Or he envisioned himself as an outstanding diplomat, a military genius, a brilliant artist. The Albanians like to quote a conversation between two beys of the Prince of Wied's cabinet. The beys were privately discussing one of their colleagues, a third bey. Suddenly one of them said, "You know, there is a way to become a millionaire overnight." "How?" queried the second. "It's very simple," answered the first, "if you can buy our friend for what he is worth and sell him for what he *think*s he is worth."

The incompetence of these petty tyrants was passively accepted by the backward peasant population. In southern Albania, where practically all the Massachusetts Albanians hail from, the peasants made up ninety-five per cent of the inhabitants; artisans, small traders and clergymen accounted for about four per cent, and the beys for the remaining one per cent. In addition to controlling all the military and civil administrative posts, the beys owned and cultivated the richer lands. Their peasants were not much better off than serfs. Where lands had not been appropriated by the beys, the peasants lived in "free villages." But even these villages were powerless against the inroads of the beys, should they cast a predatory eye upon the individual parcels of land or

the communal fields. In the past, peasants tried to escape from these conditions by fleeing to the mountains, where they settled in the more remote and inaccessible places. Until recently, however, even the fugitive peasants were generally compelled to pay some kind of tribute to the beys.

Under these conditions little wealth was produced. Probably not more than six or seven per cent of the total area of Albania is arable; and, as is usually the case where the system of *latifundia* prevails, only a small fraction of even this area was actually cultivated. The peasant masses lived almost entirely on what little they could produce in their own villages. Each town grew its own food supply, raised its own sheep and made its own clothes out of the wool, maintained its mill to grind grain, and supported a blacksmith and perhaps a community store.

The rare pieces of actual money which the average family saw during a year were jealously meted out to purchase salt, soap, coffee, sugar, and a few imported fineries. In general, exchange was effected through barter. A peasant who coveted a pound of sugar might take the equivalent in wheat or eggs to the community store. Or he might bargain directly with his neighbor to accept a measure of wheat for a pound of grapes. A sort of "16-to-1" relationship between wheat, which was very scarce, and corn, which was relatively abundant, was often recognized.

Although the peasant made most of his bargains in his own or the next village, several of the larger Albanian towns held weekly bazaars where commodities from within a fairly wide radius were brought and exchanged. The journey to the bazaar might require as much as five days over perilous, brigand-infested roads. To meet the needs of peasants who could not make the trip themselves, there grew up a class of professional carriers, called *ķirachis*. The *ķirachi*, with his pack mule, would take the peasants' orders to the market place and return days later, receiving for his trouble a fee of from fifty cents to a dollar and a quarter. Some of the *ķirachis* were fortunate enough to own more than one mule, and their earnings were proportionately higher.

Peasants who owned their own land, or who leased diminutive parcels from beys, had to work from sunrise to sundown to escape starvation. As for agricultural laborers, if hired for a short period as extras, they might receive their food and anywhere from two to ten cents a day. When hired by the year, they were given food and shelter and something between two and ten dollars, from which they had to buy their clothing. The shepherds, an important class in Albania where sheep raising had always been one of the principal occupations, were a little better off than the field laborers. Weatherbeaten lads who drove their sheep or goats up the mountainsides in the summer returned in the winter to the milder lowlands. They often worked with the sons of the owner, for the sheep raisers not infrequently set their boys to tending the herds. Shepherds could be hired on a yearly basis, or sometimes even for a longer period, at an annual wage of five to fifteen dollars.

In the midst of this general poverty, the masons and carpenters formed almost a privileged class. Paid by the job on a contract basis, these skilled artisans sometimes netted as much as fifty dollars a year. Their prosperity rested in part on the exploitation of young boys, whom they drove hard from dawn to evening for a wage of not more than five dollars a year. The blacksmith, almost always a gypsy, also did a lively business. Blacksmiths, as well as silversmiths, tailors, shoemakers, saddlers, harness-makers, and tinkers took apprentices for their keep. When these lads received anything at all, it amounted to not more than ten dollars a year.

The storekeeper had one of the most flourishing occupations in the Albanian village. This business was monopolized almost exclusively by Orthodox Christians. Each storekeeper operated under the protection of some bey or *teke* (a Mohammedan monastery), without whose favor he could hardly have lasted twenty-four hours. Everything from pins and needles to cloth made in America could be found on his shelves. Besides serving as the town broker for barter transactions, he performed the function

of official scribe for the townspeople and general money-lender for prosperous villagers who might need short-time loans for taxes or grazing rights. Not infrequently he managed to accumulate a sizeable sum of money. Most of the American Albanians who are today keeping stores in Massachusetts were storekeepers, or the sons of storekeepers, in southern Albania.

Between the masses and the beys there was a small stratum of somewhat more pretentious merchants, but virtually no professional class. There were perhaps a dozen towns in the whole of Albania where one could find a doctor or two, more rarely a dentist. Most of the dental work, tooth pulling, was done by local barbers, and barber shops existed only in the larger towns. A professional teacher was hard to find in the Albania of 1900. Unlike the Mohammedan towns, which in most cases ignored the whole problem of education, the Christian villages almost invariably maintained some kind of school; but it was commonly a church school conducted in Greek by the village priest, who had little Greek and less learning. No teaching was permitted in the Albanian language. In the largest towns, like Korcha and Scutari, there were fairly satisfactory educational facilities under foreign tutelage. Even there, however, the Mohammedan lower classes seldom sent their children to school. Sons of the nobility usually studied abroad in Turkish schools or in European capitals, particularly Paris and Vienna.

Just as there were few teachers because there was little education, there were no lawyers because there was practically no law. What use would it have been to summon an evildoer to court? No one could compel him to appear. If he did appear voluntarily, nine chances out of ten he could buy the judge for a pittance. Besides, no one transacted any business that required the services of attorneys. Marcus Aurelius, who is said to have yearned for a state without lawyers, would have found his paradise in Albania.

Brigandage was a highly lucrative profession. From time immemorial it has been a recognized source of livelihood in Al-

bania. As far back as 230 B.C., according to one authority, "the Illyrian pirates could send out a fleet of a hundred vessels equipped with a force of five thousand men." Under Turkish rule the Christian villagers, helpless because they were forbidden to possess arms, quaked at the ruthlessness of the vandals, while the authorities looked on without lifting a finger. The brigands devastated towns, waylaid caravans and lone travelers, and refined the art of kidnaping wealthy or prominent men. When ransom was demanded the victims paid without performing the useless ceremony of notifying the government. In summertime the brigands remained for the most part in the mountains and followed the herds. In winter they wandered from town to town, wherever they had a *yatak*, or hiding place—usually in the defenseless Christian towns. The brigands operated in bands of five to twenty-five men under one chief, the *kapedan*. If to a distant romancer like Bernard Shaw the *kapedan* of one of these Balkan gangs might appear a lordly fellow gifted with all the primitive graces, in real life he was more likely to be an uncouth ruffian, with *haiduche* (garb) blackened by filth and grease. Successful outlaws enjoyed excellent incomes until they were murdered by a rival gang.

A considerable number abandoned the life of the outlaw to join the gendarmerie. This was not really a thoroughgoing reform, for the Turkish gendarmes, when they were not former highwaymen, usually had records as village loafers or "bad boys." They received a relatively high salary, from two to twelve dollars a month, in addition to whatever they could get on the side.

In earlier times many Albanians had found an outlet for their fighting spirit in the ranks of the *bashibazouks*, soldiers of fortune who enlisted under some local chieftain to fight Turkey's wars for little or no remuneration except the spoils in the captured territories. So many Albanians figured among the *bashibazouks* that in common parlance the Turkish word for Albanian, *Arnaut*, was often used as a generic term for the whole class. Long after the *bashibazouks* had become assimilated in Egypt, where they

fought against Napoleon, Egyptian mothers used to frighten their children by saying, "Hush, the *Arnauts* are coming." Tolstoy remarks in *War and Peace* that when Russian generals wanted to put their soldiers to shame, they would tell them they behaved like *Arnauts*. In 1900 the *bashibazouks* were a thing of the past, for Turkey, in a desperate effort at reform, had abolished the institution. The tamer life of the regular soldier, in the army which Turkey was trying to create, attracted few Albanians.

The Albanian immigrants to America forsook a country where primitive lawlessness was both tradition and fact. They left behind them a desperate poverty which had kept the population of Albania stationary for a thousand years. The peasant was haunted by a nagging fear that his supply of the principal staple of diet, a coarse bread made of corn mixed with rye and wheat, would not suffice for his needs. In any village one could hear gaunt children crying for a crust. To supplement the corn bread the peasant might occasionally use barley, ordinarily reserved for horses and mules; and, if times were good, his table might display beans, rice, or green vegetables. Meat, like fish, which was consumed chiefly by the Christians, was reserved for feast days. Although some butter, cheese, and olive oil were usually stored away for winter use, dairy products, including milk, were considered luxuries.

Malnutrition and filth brought about a high mortality; consumption, bone diseases, and malaria were rampant. Not uncommonly the peasant had but one shirt. Yet, for all their poverty, the women sometimes contrived to clothe their families in creditably warm, and even gay, homespun. The Sunday church procession was a colorful picture of fezzed men and brilliantly kerchiefed women.

The average peasant home displayed the same desire of vital, if undernourished, women to make the most of a poverty-stricken lot. Its bare neatness was uncluttered by ornament, except for the inevitable icon in the Christian houses. Several families often lived in two or three rooms. The usual house, one or two storied

and constructed of rough stone, had rooms reserved for married couples and for entertaining guests, and a large *ashef*, or kitchen, which served as living room, dining room, and sleeping quarters for the unmarried members of the family. The fireplace, center of family life, provided all the heat that was available either for cooking or for fighting the damp chill of the roughly floored house. In winter, the unglassed windows were filled with old rags, straw, or wooden slabs, in the hope that the bitter wind might be kept out. Sewage systems were unknown; although a house occasionally boasted its own well, the peasants generally carried their water in earthenware or copper kettles from streams or troughs. Most houses had several of these kettles, and perhaps a few wooden spoons and copper plates. A wooden chest set against the wall indicated that the woman of the family had some homespun garments to treasure, or a few trinkets garnered from her wedding celebration. No one had beds. They used home-made mats of wool, cotton, or straw, covered with coarse blankets. In the daytime they were piled in a corner; too few for cleanliness, the blankets were often infested with lice. It was an evening ritual in many of the houses for members of the family to congregate at the fireplace before going to bed, each one solemnly shaking out his blanket to kill a few of the pests. The Mohammedans, poorer than the Christians and even less solicitous about cleanliness, were easy prey for vermin. Directly adjacent to the house were the quarters reserved for horses, mules, donkeys, cows, sheep, and goats. Such were the better homes. In the poorer huts only a scant partition divided the one long room into a house and a barn.

The Albanian immigrant to America usually came from one of the villages of the south. As he stepped ashore from the Ellis Island ferry to the busy pavements of New York he probably compared it to his home village. The whole town had consisted of perhaps a hundred families, although in Albania it had seemed fairly large. The houses were grouped together in a patternless cluster about a small church, on the veranda of which he had

often paused after services to chat with the other villagers. He remembered the church belfry towering about the houses, and the bell that had rung out over the countryside to summon him to mass, to a holiday celebration, to hear the news during some village emergency. Not far from the church stood another small structure, the village schoolhouse. As a boy, while his sisters had stayed at home to help in the house or in the fields, he had gone there every morning, carrying a book or two and the stick of wood which represented his share of the fuel to be consumed. Then there was the village store. He recalled the resplendent array of goods imported from strange faraway places: kerosene oil from Russia; sewing cotton from England; Turkish fezzes from Austria; cigarette papers from France; sugar from the plains of Bohemia; coffee from Asia or Brazil. None of these things would ever seem so wonderful again. The village store was flanked by the shop of the gypsy blacksmith. While townspeople straggled in and out with pieces of ironware for the smith to sharpen or repair, two men loitered in front, easily distinguished from the rest of the population by their Mohammedan garb. These formidable individuals, savage in their appearance even when they were faithfully performing their duties, were the bodyguards of the community. The villagers had reason not to trust them too well: on occasion these guardians of the peace were known to betray the town to a band of outlaws for a share of the ransom.

In his far greater dread of the bewildering new life that was opening out before him in America, the immigrant almost forgot the old dread under which he had lived in Albania. In retrospect, Albania seemed a peaceful world; a well-ordered world, where women did most of the tilling and drudgery in the field, while the majority of the men had their own trades and were likely to be away from home plying them during the greater part of the year. The village the immigrant remembered was probably a "free village." Each resident owned his little home, and however much he felt the pinch of privation, he at least had no mort-

gage to worry about. He owned two or three sheep or goats, perhaps even more. Every morning the shepherd employed by the town called at each house to collect the animals and lead them off to graze in the communal woodlot on the edge of the village.

The immigrant to Massachusetts could also remember a Mohammedan village, although like other Christians he had generally avoided contact with followers of the Prophet. Externally, the Mohammedan village was not unlike his own. Actually there were a good many differences. The Mohammedan always displayed certain distinctive features of dress, so that a practiced eye could tell a man's religion at a glance. Moslem women rarely worked in the field. In the Mohammedan village there were greater extremes of affluence and desperate poverty than among Christians. A few quite imposing houses belonged to local big-wigs, or *agas*, but the masses of the people were far poorer than the Christians. These people had no school; even their mosque, rarely attended by the men, and never by the women, was dilapidated. The blacksmith shop, however, would be doing a lively business, for Albanian Mohammedans, in possession of the richest agricultural areas, had more tools than Christians to keep trim. The crucial difference between Christians and Mohammedans was that the latter were allowed to carry arms. No Mohammedan ever went out without his rifle or his revolver or his *yatagan*. The walls of his house were decorated with firearms instead of pictures. When he met his fellows in the village store to discuss great events, from the Boer War to the most recent local kidnapping, the sessions not infrequently ended up in a murderous brawl. Possession of arms not only enabled him to terrorize Christians and steal their sheep, but bolstered his feeling of superiority. However poverty-stricken he might be, he felt himself an integral part of the Turkish Empire. Since 70 per cent of the population consisted of Mohammedans, it was natural that the unarmed Christian minority should be maltreated.

The country was divided into two hostile communities. Mo-

hammedans, as long as they respected the wishes of their beys, were relatively free, and they could always find compensation in baiting Christians. Mohammedans even felt a genuine reverence for the sultan whom, as head of their religion, they esteemed in much the same way as Japanese regard their emperor. As the peasant saw it, the beys had always been masters, and that was what the sultan wished. Not the bey but the Christian was the principal object of the Mohammedan peasant's distrust; Christians were considered an alien people—probably agents of Greece.

There were other factors that helped to perpetuate this attitude. Each bey kept an army of followers whom he could dispatch at a moment's notice to bring a recalcitrant peasant to reason. The bey himself was above the law. He was never prosecuted for murder. If, as was unlikely, a Turkish official should hear of some flagrant misdeed, the bey knew that he could buy the Turk's silence. Living under these conditions, the peasants were sullen fatalists. All of life and death they saw written on the forehead of the newborn infant. Why should anyone bother to improve his lot? Why should one even complain?

The clergy on both sides labored to foster and deepen hatred between the two religions. Except among the Roman Catholics of the north, where most of the churchmen were graduates of Austrian or Italian universities, the ill paid Albanian clergy, whether Christian or Mohammedan, was usually drawn from the most ignorant section of the population. Despite their scant respect for these unlettered and unvirtuous mentors, the peasants were easily victimized by the propaganda of hatred.

Among the Mohammedans, one group existed from whom the masses could derive more salutary counsels. Whereas many Moslem Albanians belonged to the orthodox Sunnite Sect, the semi-heretical monastic order of the liberal *Bektashi* had taken deep root. In the *Bektashi* monasteries or *tekės*, about which were grouped thousands of lay brethren, the dervishes of the order preached a pantheistic, universalist creed, which in its essence bordered close upon Buddhism. The story of the warfare of this

sect against age-old ignorance, fanaticism, and cruelty is a fascinating one, although it can barely be touched upon. The *Bektashi* were tolerant enough to admit Christians into their order; and it was one of their principal concerns to protect the Christian population of the country against Mohammedan attacks. Their *tekės* were always open to any wayfarer or chance visitor; a simple, generous meal was provided for him; and if he stayed long enough, he might grow skeptical of his inherited distrust of any religion or race other than his own. He might eventually become initiated into an underground movement of revolt against Turkish domination. It was primarily the spread of *Bektashism* among the Janissaries which had rendered that order useless to the sultans and had led to its sanguinary disbandment. Ever since the early nineteenth century, when shrewd Ali Pasha Tepeleni had sponsored the heretical sect as a means of alienating the Moslem population of the country from their Turkish rulers, the *tekės* had kept alive the seeds of an Albanian nationalist movement. While performing charitable offices and spreading the creed of mutual helpfulness and universal love, they were incidentally doing what they could to diminish the breach between the Moslem populace and the Christians. As conditions ripened in the twentieth century these *tekės* were to become hotbeds of Albanian nationalism.

In the years when a group of adventurous young men began to "discover" America, Albania was still a country disorganized and anarchical, loosely tied to the Turkish Empire. The beys rode roughshod over the peasantry. There were few energetic influences to break the stalemate of corruption and despair. Before their country could be reborn young men had to venture forth to the "land behind the sun" and toil to create for Albania a strong right arm. In a few years American dollars were to revolutionize Albania and new hope was to spread over the Albanian countryside, vitalizing the peasantry and even capturing some of the beys.

CHAPTER II

THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

THE ALBANIAN's first response to life in one of our mill towns was shrinking and bewildered. Thrust into a complex of relationships which he could neither grasp nor evaluate, the immigrant of 1905 denied them. "This is not my country," he reasoned; "I have not come to stay. How the American people live, why they act and think as they do—these problems are not my problems. I cannot adopt their way of life, for I have my own, and I prefer my own. My body may be in America, but my heart and soul are in the land of my birth." While a few immigrants were successful and acquired property within a short period after their arrival, by far the greater number, simple factory hands, deplored their misfortunes in the new "land of opportunity." Confused by the manners of the industrial community in which they were forced to labor, they locked themselves within the precincts of their *konaks*. Chance remarks revealed the loneliness and despair of homesick, tired, and despondent men. "We are turning ourselves into beasts of burden in America. We are wasting ourselves in factories." To those who had suffered injuries while working at unfamiliar machines, life seemed even more bleak. "What a sight we are! Some of us have become humpbacked from stooping. Some of us have one eye, others no legs, still others no fingers. This has America done to us. Work is God here, maybe the Devil. A man should live in his own country."

Long hours of labor in stifling textile mills and dingy shoe factories, the absence of female companionship, the cramped existence of the *konak* served as a foil for the immigrant's roseate

vision of the life which he had abandoned back home. Before he had crossed the ocean, the politics of his native land had never interested him; family ties and family feuds were far more absorbing than any conception of Albanian nationality. In the American factory town, with its variety of foreign nationalities living in close proximity yet alien to one another, the Albanian first became fully conscious of his national identity. At least he felt that his group in the *konak* was different from the surrounding peoples.

Nostalgia for an idyllic existence in Albania was born amid the grinding of American machines. When ardent crusaders for Albanian nationalism came to these factory hands in 1905, they found an audience already restive, already vaguely awakened. The small Massachusetts community was bound together by the sentiment, "We are in exile; America is for Americans, not for us." The nationalist preachers, emissaries from Albanian patriotic headquarters in Rumania, Greece, and Egypt, brought glowing words to express the newborn feeling. All the phrases which in the late nineteenth century had kindled the passions of a score of central European and Balkan peoples were at their disposal. In the exiled Albanian these words aroused emotions he had never felt as a starving peasant under the rule of haughty beys.

But the Albanian immigrant was also beset by other emotions, inherited from century-old prejudices. "Albania must regain her independence," urged the nationalist spokesmen, "for it is not decreed that we remain a subject nation throughout eternity." A homeland, their own schools, their own literature, an Albania freed from Turkish fetters: such ideas were difficult for the exiles to grasp. Those who were Mohammedans could hardly conceive of breaking away from the rule of their powerful Turkish co-religionists. A large proportion of the Albanian immigrants to Massachusetts were members of the Greek Orthodox Church, which had nurtured them on strong pro-Greek sympathies. The apostles of Albanian nationalism who came to America from

more mature circles abroad to impart their doctrines to the immigrant community had an untutored and confused group with which to work.

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In the 1870's, during the general pandemonium raised by the Balkan squabbles, the Albanian problem first posed itself for serious consideration at European council tables. For decades the various appendages of the Ottoman Empire in Europe had been threatening to sever themselves from the "sick man." Plots for revolt and reform had been seething in the sultan's own palace. Among the Balkan nationalities, the growing popularity of ancient native languages as literary media had resurrected forgotten glories of past history for subject peoples. Long dormant racial and religious questions were arising to plague the Turkish government. The proclamation of Greek independence in 1821 had been an early portent.

In 1875 Bulgarians, Serbs, and Montenegrins took up arms against their Turkish suzerain. The sultan retaliated with barbarous massacres of the rebels. Russia, self-appointed champion of Christian peoples in the Near East, declared war on the Sublime Porte in April 1877, and in less than a year defeated the Turks. At the Treaty of San Stefano, new lands for four independent nations, Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece, were carved out of the Turkish Empire. Yet the grant of territory to four Balkan countries created the Albanian problem, for within the borders of the new states were territories inhabited exclusively by Albanians.

The Albanian movement for independence which rose to combat the Treaty of San Stefano was thus antagonistic to the nationalism of other Balkan states. There was danger that the fate of Albania after the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire would be more grim than under the regime of the pashas and their sultan. "Freedom" had unleashed wild nationalistic forces in the new Balkan states, clamoring for territorial aggrandizement and

threatening to crush Albanian aspirations more thoroughly than had the Porte during its most repressive periods. As Turkey grew progressively weaker, the other Balkan nations, hoping to round out their boundaries, threatened the Albanians with extinction. Albania had become a pawn in Balkan intrigues whose ramifications extended far beyond the peninsula.

To safeguard the integrity of their country, Albanian leaders, undoubtedly encouraged by Turkey, gathered in a National Congress at Prizren in 1878 to create the Albanian League for the Defense of the Rights of Albanian Nationality. It was hoped that Albanians might thus exert some pressure on the powers gathered at the Congress of Berlin to reconsider the whole Near Eastern question. Few events in the history of modern Albania are as crucial as the creation of this league. For the first time Albania became an international problem. Even the landed aristocracy of Albania, realizing that their holdings would be lost if Turkey were destroyed, joined in the general cry for autonomy under Turkish protection. Sultan Abdul Hamid lent moral and material support to the league, for thus the disintegrating Turkish Empire hoped to impress the great powers with the discords which would result from further extension of the privileges of the Balkan states. At the Congress of Berlin, however, Albanian demands for autonomy and protests against the partition of their land were dismissed with Bismarck's curt: "There is no Albanian nationality."

The Albanian League countered by organizing military units to forestall a division of their homeland. When Montenegrins attempted to occupy the territories allotted to them, the Albanians clashed with the invaders. The Montenegrins appealed to the powers for aid. Then even Turkey, somewhat alarmed at the new outburst of virility among the Albanians, joined forces with the Montenegrins and drove the Albanians back to their mountains.

Unsuccessful in war, the Albanian League turned to cultural propaganda under the slogan: "A union of all the Albanian ele-

ments, regardless of religion or sect, in the establishment of an Albanian autonomous state." Most Balkan nationalist movements had derived great moral sustenance from the revival of their ancient dialects (which had been only spoken languages) as written tools in the hands of poets and scholars. In emulation of the successful "nationalisms," the first Albanian *Abetare* (a book of ABC's) was published in Constantinople in 1879. A year later, a group of Albanian educators headed by Sami Bey Frasheri, most of whom were in the service of the Turkish government, founded the first Albanian literary club, the Society for the Development of the Albanian Language. They published books, magazines, and newspapers in that "strange and accursed Albanian tongue." No sooner had these cultural activities reached a point of maturity than the sultan suppressed them; he arrested the Albanian intellectuals and banished them from the empire.

The dispersion of the Albanian intelligentsia, instead of destroying the movement, only injected greater fervor into the missionary propaganda of the leaders. Their literary club, closed down in Constantinople, transferred its locale to Bucharest, where it was reorganized in 1884 under the name of *Drita* (Light). Simultaneously the Albanian colony in Egypt organized a branch of *Drita*. A few years later the Bucharest group was renamed *Dituria* (Knowledge) and it began the publication of sundry books and a monthly magazine bearing its own name. Another Albanian group in Sofia followed the example of its sister colonies by starting cultural organizations. This Sofia group often cooperated with Macedonian revolutionaries who maintained their center in the same city. Both groups had the same enemies. And in plotting their insurrectionary activities, Albanian *comitadji* and Macedonian *comitadji* followed the same pattern of intrigue.

In their passionate attempt to prove the righteousness of their cause the Albanians turned even to anthropology. Jacques Barzun in his *Race: Myth or Superstition* quotes their plea as an example of nationalist propaganda: "The Albanians in 1883 protested to the foreign offices against the cession of Epirus to the

Greeks. Their memorandum, supposedly inspired by Italy, said in part: 'To understand why the Greeks and Albanians cannot live under the same regime it is only necessary to examine the entirely different structure of their skulls: the Greeks are brachycephalic, whereas the Albanians are dolichocephalic and lack almost completely the occipital protuberance.'"

The propaganda of the Bucharest literary society penetrated to Albania and in 1884 led to the establishment of a secondary school for boys in Korcha, where the nationalist ideology was formulated to appeal to both Moslem and Christian. But the Albanian movement for national education, secular and autonomous, met with the bitter hostility of the Greek Orthodox clergy. They denounced the Albanian teachers to the government and their schools were shut down.

Through the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first years of the present century Bucharest remained the center of Albanian nationalist propaganda. In 1906 the central organization altered its name from Dituria to Bashkimi (Union) and again intensified its activities. Books had been streaming from the prolific pen of Naim Bey Frasheri. Sami Bey Frasheri's *Albania Past and Present*, published in Bucharest in 1899, was the first history of Albania written in the native tongue. Frasheri's plan for the future independent state was a rather crude imitation of Plato's *Republic*: he spoke for the erection of an aristocratic republic governed by a body of elders, or *pleqesia*. His ideal constitution was in a sense naive, but it provided the nationalist movement with a political program.

From Bucharest, cultural propaganda was disseminated to Egypt and Bulgaria; funds and arms were dispatched to groups in Albania who were secretly preparing an uprising. As immigration to America increased, the leaders of the Albanian nationalist movement began to devote themselves to converting this new settlement of their people to the cause.

In keeping with the typical pattern of nascent nationalism, the newspaper played an important role in forging a common

national spirit among the ignorant Albanian mill workers of Massachusetts. The establishment of a weekly, *Kombi*, (Nation) in Boston on June 12, 1906, laid the cornerstone of the Albanian nationalist movement in the United States. *Kombi*, first Albanian newspaper in America, was owned, edited, and published by a middle-aged intellectual, Sotir Petsi. He had attended the University of Athens in 1886, but had been refused a diploma because of his activities on behalf of Albanian nationalism. When he came to Boston in 1905, he was a man of forty, who had achieved some reputation in the movement abroad. With the financial assistance of his fellow countrymen, chiefly his own townsmen, he began the publication of the historic newspaper in a cellar at 100 Hudson Street, in the Boston slums. *Kombi* supported the program laid down by the nationalist leaders in the Old Country, which at this time called for an autonomous Albania within the framework of the old Turkish Empire; Turkish military protection; Albanian schools; native Albanian judges, administrators, police, and prison wardens; restriction of the military service of Albanians to the confines of Albania; and adoption of the Albanian language for all public transactions.

In the same year, shortly after the first issue of *Kombi* appeared under Petsi's editorship, another Albanian nationalist came to Massachusetts, Fan Stylian Noli, whose influence in the community was destined to outstrip by far that of the founder of the weekly. Born in 1882 at Ibrik Tepe, an Albanian settlement in Eastern Thrace, he was educated in a Greek elementary school and in a Greek gymnasium. For a time he lived in Athens, doing odd jobs. In 1903 he moved to Egypt, where he taught in a Greek school during the day, and worked nights as a prompter in a local theater. During his Egyptian period he made the acquaintance of a number of Albanian merchants, who first brought him into contact with the nationalist movement. It was these Albanian businessmen who persuaded him to sail to America, and provided him with passage money. In Massachusetts, Noli joined Petsi in fostering the Albanian nationalist movement.

To the enterprising Albanian editors of 1906 fell not only the normal chores of writing and setting up type for the paper, but the far more arduous task of getting the Albanians to *read* their publication. Since the Turks had banned Albanian periodicals in the Old Country, most of the immigrants had never seen their native language in print, and only a rare few could read Albanian. Hence the nationalist leaders' first preoccupation was to teach their compatriots the rudiments of reading and writing.

For this purpose the *konak* was an ideal institution; it served as the schoolhouse. Some one of the group of ten or fifteen could read or write Albanian. The "learned one" was employed by his room-mates to read letters from friends and relatives. During the nationalist campaign for Albanian literacy, this person became the teacher of his companions. The arrival of the Albanian newspaper was eagerly awaited by members of the *konak*. In a new world, still foreign to them, the appearance of an Albanian paper seemed to give them something of their own. *Kombi* reached the *konak* on Friday or Saturday, and readers could absorb its contents in a leisurely fashion over the week-end. The literate man of the *konak* would first read every line of every article before the group, often including casual notices and advertisements. Then a heated discussion would burst forth as the entire group wrangled over the interpretation of the news. From time to time the *konaks* would receive a bundle of books from some colony abroad—Rumania, Bulgaria, or Egypt. There were elementary readers, small books of patriotic poems, political pamphlets, and translations from foreign languages. When one group exhausted its reading matter, it would pass the books and leaflets on to a neighboring *konak*.

This mass education movement was designed to further the nationalist cause, but learning to read and write gave many of the immigrants interests outside the movement. A fresh breeze of life streamed through the close, dead atmosphere of the *konak*. In the years following the establishment of *Kombi* in Boston, the metropolitan district became the working center of a number

of Albanian intellectuals whose sole mission in life was the education of their people.

They taught English as well as Albanian. It was not unusual for *Kombi* in 1908 to list notices like the following: "We have learned that Christo Dako opened yesterday a school in Natick for the purpose of teaching the Albanians English. . . . Mr. Dako wants to utilize his other evenings (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) in giving lessons to the Albanians in Boston. Mr. Dako is also going to teach Albanian to those people who don't know it. He charges no fees or tuition for his lessons." As immigrants learned to read and print simple English words, their chances of getting better jobs increased. When a student reached the point of reading his own newspaper and writing his own letters, his self-respect was enhanced; and the mill-town immigrant was in need of such encouragement to render life endurable. While nationalist leaders drew images of the future glories of Albania for their followers, they were providing them with concrete examples of the value and virtues of education. "The Pen is Mightier than the Sword," "Education Spells Success," and similar adages were current headlines in all Albanian newspapers.

Interest in education led many of the younger men to public night schools for further instruction. But at this stage they met strong objections on the part of the elder members of the *konak*, who still considered the American adventure as a temporary episode. The older immigrants could understand the acquisition of an elementary knowledge of English as a means toward an end—toward making more money before the return to Albania. But they feared that too much of the "new teaching" might persuade the younger men to forsake the religion of their fathers. The elders of the *konak* argued that the youths might learn the American language and ways all too well—that they might become completely Americanized and remain here. What would then happen to the parents, old peasants depending upon their sons' return for support in their last years?

In 1907 and 1908, as events in the Turkish Empire seemed to be reaching a climax, the progress of the Albanian nationalist movement in Massachusetts heightened the spirits of the local leaders. Isolated *konaqs* and a newspaper no longer sufficed for the complicated political problems facing the Albanian nationalists. In their attempt to unite the scattered sympathizers of the cause into a powerful organization, they founded the society of Besa-Besen. The double utterance of the Albanian word for honor (*besa*) symbolized the sacred bond existing among the members. An Albanian nationalist in Massachusetts, thousands of miles removed from his native hills, still refreshed his morals by repeating the pledges and flamboyant oaths of the tribesman. Besa-Besen became a militant organization, and Albanian groups in Worcester, Natick, and Southbridge rallied to its support.

Nationalist ardor and nationalist vigilance were more than a vain display. Within the Albanian community forces were working to destroy the nationalist movement in its infancy—the same forces which in the Old Country had labored to keep the populace divided. Especially dangerous was the influence of Greece—more insidious because it played a dual role. Greece fanned the southern Albanian's antagonism to his Turkish overlord. Ever since 1830, when the Greeks established themselves as an independent nation, the Christian Albanians of the south had been taught to look upon the newly formed Greek state as their protector against persecution by Moslems. But despite their traditional hostility, Greeks were united with Turks in curbing the growth of native Albanian feeling. Greek Orthodox priests, who served the Albanians in Massachusetts and in their native land, preached against the use of the Albanian tongue in church. Anyone who advocated teaching the Bible in Albanian was an enemy of Christ, because this language was the speech of the ungodly. At the same time Turkish policy fostered antagonism between the Christian Albanians, whom the official census classified as Greeks, and Mohammedan Albanians, who were listed as Turks. It was feared that the growth of Albanian national feeling among

the Mohammedans might lead to the creation of another Balkan state and a further weakening of the empire.

In Massachusetts the nationalist movement was less seriously threatened by pro-Turkish propaganda than by pro-Greek. Moslems are far less dependent than Greek Orthodox peoples upon communal religious ceremonies. Moslem Albanians in America neither built nor attended any mosques. Whatever influence Islam exerted upon its Albanian followers in America was exercised informally or through the channels of traditional sentiment. Early Albanian Christian immigrants, on the other hand, flocked to the Greek Orthodox churches, where pro-Greek clergymen systematically and blatantly spread ideas antipathetic to Albanian nationalism. There were other reasons, too, for the relative abeyance of pro-Turkish pressure. Not until after 1912, following the outbreak of the Balkan Wars, did Moslem Albanians come to America in appreciable numbers. By that time, hope for the survival of the Turkish Empire in Europe was dying, even among Mohammedans. Moslem Albanians realized that Turkish rule in the Balkans was at an end. But Greece was dynamic and expansionist. Besides the church, a number of minor organizations were fostered by the Greeks to spread propaganda for the extension of Greek influence among Albanians. The best known of these organizations was the Pan-Epirotic Union founded in 1918, although this society had predecessors.

Among the Albanian nationalist leaders both Mohammedans and members of the Orthodox Church decried political pressure from co-religionists hostile to their movement. After about 1912, active members of the movement were more or less evenly divided between Mohammedans and Christians. They worked together, at least on the surface, without any friction that could be traced to religious difference. Certain remnants of mutual distrust, inherited from old tradition, occasionally cropped up, of course. But these never effectively divided the active leaders. It was among the rank and file of Albanian immigrants outside the nationalist movement, or only halfheartedly attached to it,

that pro-Greek and pro-Turkish prejudices were a real threat. To capture their tepid compatriots and weld them into a fighting force, the nationalistic groups had to defeat the forces that played on these traditional sympathies.

In 1907 and 1908 Albanian nationalists took a long step toward rooting out the influence of the Greek clergy. So overt had been the pro-Greek bias exhibited by these priests that Christian Albanians started a movement to sever their relations entirely with the church. Their impatience reached a breaking point when one of their compatriots in Hudson, Massachusetts, a zealous worker for the cause, died, and the Greek clergy refused to officiate at his burial. Nationalists roused their lukewarm fellows to protest: if the Greek Orthodox clergy would not keep out of politics, the Albanian nationalists would set up a church for themselves. It would be an independent Albanian church that would realize national ideals; services would be conducted in the native tongue.

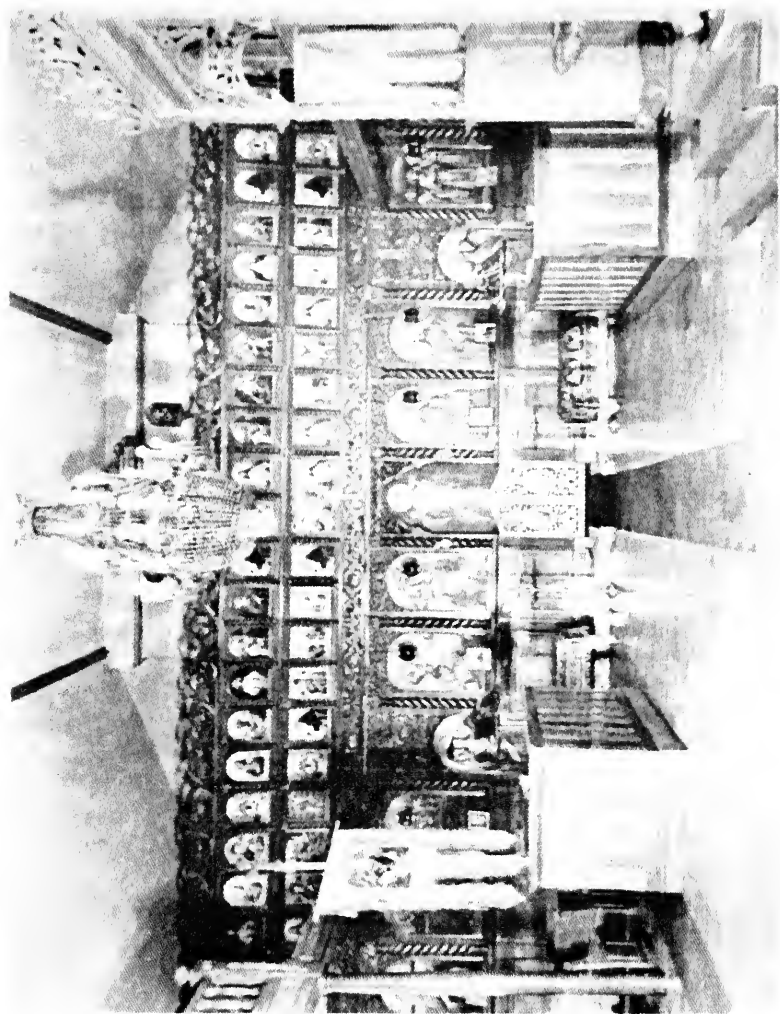
The year 1908 was momentous in American Albanian life. Fan Noli jumped to the head of the movement for religious separatism and called a convention of Christian Albanians from settlements throughout New England. The delegates resolved to abandon the unpatriotic church and to create an Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church with Fan Noli as their first shepherd. Platon, Russian Archbishop of New York, ordained Fan Noli a priest; a hall on Tremont Street became the tabernacle; and the National Church Association was founded to protect the rights of the newly formed body. Never before, not even in Albania, had Albanians worshiped in an autocephalous church.

This schism was a powerful stimulus to the growth of nationalist sentiment. If national character could be preserved in the church, why not in activities of daily life? Fan Noli's pulpit developed into a tribune for nationalist preaching. Revolt against Turkey became the official Albanian policy, preached in the Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church to both Moslem and Christian listeners. Naturally, some time elapsed before a ma-

jority of the Albanians came to recognize the new institution as theirs. At first it was frequented only by ardent nationalists, who had chosen the most zealous of their compatriots as priest.

Nineteen hundred and eight also marked the turning point for Albanians in the homeland. That year the Young Turks made a successful revolution, and hope awakened that Albanians might profit from the upheaval. The Albanians were still fearful of complete independence, which, they believed, would leave their country a prey to the stronger Balkan states. Rather than complete independence, they desired autonomous rights and the reform of Turkish rule. To this end they had participated in the preparation of the Young Turks' uprising for a reform of the empire. On the eve of the revolt, certain Albanian Moslems were holding high posts in the government of Sultan Abdul Hamid, and they had an opportunity to extend a measure of protection over their compatriots.

The cooperation between Albanian nationalists and Young Turks often miscarried. In 1907 Bashkimi, Bucharest center of Albanian nationalism, dispatched Bajo Topulli, an Albanian revolutionary, to Boston to collect funds as well as to persuade young men in the community to return to Albania and join secret insurrectionary groups. Topulli maintained headquarters in a dilapidated Boston hotel and was visited by young Albanians from all parts of New England. With Fan Noli as his mentor he made the circuit of Albanian communities in Massachusetts and Maine, exhorting Albanian patriots to return to their homeland for an uprising the following summer. In the spring of 1908 a group left Massachusetts for Sofia, where they were joined by other volunteers; they were then shipped to Bari, Italy, where their numbers were still further increased. A motorboat was hired; munitions were purchased; preparations were complete for an expedition across the Adriatic to southern Albania. But before the arrival of their leader, Topulli, who had gone to Bucharest for a secret conference with the Albanian Nationalist



THE MOTHER CHURCH, BOSTON

Committee, the Young Turks struck their blow and upset the plans of the Albanian volunteers.

The Albanian nationalists and the Young Turks remained united for the time being in an effort to rejuvenate the Turkish Empire. The Young Turks promised religious freedom, free education, freedom of the press, freedom of speech and assembly, and thoroughgoing parliamentary reforms: these were the same principles which *Kombi* was currently advocating in Boston. When the army corps stationed in Macedonia, composed chiefly of Albanians, gave the signal for revolt against Abdul Hamid, the alliance between Young Turks and Albanians was cemented. Abdul Hamid abdicated and a constitutional monarchy granting equal rights to subject peoples was established. The new constitution promulgated by the Young Turks augured well for the various nationality groups in the empire; it was jubilantly received in most European capitals.

Not all Albanian nationalists were deceived by the gifts which the Young Turks bore, but, good opportunists, they took advantage of all concessions. Schools in the native tongue were opened in Albania; cultural and educational clubs were permitted; books and newspapers were allowed to appear from Albanian presses. The nationalists accepted these bounties of the new Turkish liberalism. One Massachusetts group, headed by Sotir Petsi, first editor of *Kombi*, left for Albania to enjoy the newly acquired freedom. Other members of the colony were less sanguine; they instinctively distrusted the Turks, Young or old, warily recalling the Albanian proverb, "The wolf changes his hair but not his habits."

The premonitions of the skeptics were amply justified. When in 1909 the Albanians, delighted with their new rights, began to effervesce with nationalistic spirit, the Young Turks took alarm. They initiated a systematic persecution. They suspended constitutional guaranties, shut down Albanian schools and clubs, and suppressed newspapers and magazines. Albanian leaders fled

the country or were thrown into jail. The decadence of the Ottoman Empire had advanced too far to be halted by constitutional fiat. A parliamentary system along the lines of English and French liberalism could hardly be applied in a backward Asiatic country composed of groups with a bewildering variety of religious and cultural differences. With the prospect of Turkish reform completely destroyed by the treachery of the Young Turks, Massachusetts Albanians set about broadening their nationalist conceptions, aiming at more than autonomy.

By 1908 the Reverend Fan Noli had established himself as the militant leader of the Albanians in America. His prestige was all the more curious because he had been born outside of Albania and lacked the normal ties of the family and the village which make for a successful political figure in the Albanian community. Neither was he well known among leaders in the Albanian colonies of Europe. Despite this, his position in America remained uncontested until the appearance of Faik Bey Konitza in 1909. Konitza was brought to Massachusetts by the patriotic society of Besa-Besen at the suggestion of Noli himself, who wanted a capable assistant to help him with his political work. Konitza was the first Albanian bey to set foot in Massachusetts, a noble come to work with the people.

Faik Konitza was born in 1875 of an old aristocratic family living at Konitza in southern Albania. He received his elementary instruction from the Jesuits in Scutari, northern Albania, and in Constantinople. Later he studied at the universities of Dijon and Paris, completing his education in 1912 with a master's degree from Harvard. He specialized in philology and Romance languages and became known as one of the most cultivated of Albanians. At present (1939) he is Albanian minister to the United States.

In 1897, when only twenty-two years of age, Konitza began the publication of a magazine, *Albania*, which was issued in Brussels and London. This monthly, appearing in French, English, and

Albanian, was a review of Albanian folklore, history, literature, and politics. Its publication over a period of twelve years during the early phase of the nationalist movement established something of a record. Albanian intellectuals were devoted to it. The reading matter held interest even for Central European governments; Austria-Hungary, it is said, helped subsidize *Albania*, distributing its issues among Albanian students in Austrian universities. In the early days Konitza's uncle, Mahir Pasha, influential at the court of Sultan Abdul Hamid, provided his brilliant nephew with an annual allowance. After 1907, when Mahir Pasha was murdered by the Young Turks, the magazine fell on evil days. Turkey's loss was Massachusetts' gain; his guardian gone, Konitza decided to accept Noli's invitation to come to America.

During his first years in Boston, Konitza edited a new weekly, *Dielli* (Sun), which the society of Besa-Besen had begun to publish in February 1909. This successor of *Kombi* was destined to become a most influential publication. Konitza, however, remained at his post in Boston only until March 1910, when he quarreled with some of his local compatriots and left for St. Louis. *Trumpeta E Krujes* (Trumpet of Croia), which he published there in 1911, achieved little success.

Dielli's program, although somewhat more pretentious, was in essentials identical with that of *Kombi*. It advocated the recognition of Albanian nationality by the Turkish government; the definition of Albania's territorial boundaries; complete freedom of religion and press; elimination of Turkish primary schools from the new autonomous state; establishment of schools for the improvement of agriculture, arts and crafts, and animal husbandry; roadbuilding and the development of natural resources, financed by the Turkish government; separation of Albanian and Turkish rights except in military and foreign affairs. In its first issue on February 15, 1909, *Dielli* formulated in a beautifully simple manner a foreign policy providing for all Balkan contingencies. "Albania will be part of the Turkish Empire with

the above mentioned rights as long as Turkey exists in Europe. If Turkey is driven out of Europe, then Albania will become an independent nation ruled by some European prince."

The imminence of Turkey's collapse was obvious and *Dielli's* half-prophecy was ultimately fulfilled. During 1910 and 1911 new Balkan plots were hatched. Insurrections broke out, this time with the aid of Montenegro, which was encouraging the Albanians in the hope of weakening Turkey. As the Albanian Revolutionary Committee tried in vain to spread a movement which had been initiated in Podgoritsa, Montenegro, its emissaries in Massachusetts were busy collecting money for the cause. The political souls of local Albanians were still oriented toward their native land. In support of the succession of revolutions which were shaking the little country, Massachusetts Albanians evinced a peculiar mixture of patriotic ardor, when it came to speeches, and simple caution, when it came to the dispatch of funds. When Jake Guga, a Roman Catholic from Scutari, arrived in Boston with proper credentials from the revolutionary committee, he was received by the society of Besa-Besen, and several thousand dollars were collected throughout New England. Nevertheless, shrewd local leaders preferred to send the funds directly to the revolutionary committee rather than entrust them to Guga. Massachusetts Albanians gave more than financial aid; for the second time in a few years they organized a small expeditionary force. A *chete* (band of young men) was formed to fight for Albania in 1911. Their uniforms were adorned with the national colors, black and red, their caps bore the motto "Freedom or Death," and they carried a flag bearing a red and black double eagle, Scanderbeg's symbol—all Boston made.

In that year, Kristo Floki, a new editor of *Dielli*, sponsored an earnest campaign for the consolidation of the Albanian national movement in America. Many Albanian fraternal orders, some made up of kinsfolk and some of fellow townsmen, had sprung up; Floki asked that they be organized into one federation, with headquarters in Boston. The new society was to devote itself



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to strengthening the spirit of nationalism so that it would weather the great trials through which Albania was passing. In April 1912, months of negotiation were ended with the establishment of the Pan-Albanian Federation of America, called *Vatra* (Hearth). Faik Konitza reappeared to become its first secretary-general and *Dielli* was adopted as its official organ. Branches, designated by numbers, with Boston known as Number One, spread throughout New England, and organizers were sent to outlying communities. Any Albanian over twenty-one years of age was eligible for membership; the annual fee of three dollars included a subscription to *Dielli*. Boston, headquarters of *Vatra*, came to be regarded by all Albanians as one of the most important centers of their national movement.

While the movement was being organized in Massachusetts, isolated revolts continued in eastern and northern Albania. When insurrection shook the province of Kossovo in Albania, the entire country rose up in arms; insurgents captured the key city of Skopije and forced Turkey to grant autonomy to Albania. But the Balkan cauldron was seething. In October 1912, the Balkan nations—Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro—patched up their internecine quarrels and pounced upon Turkey. Little Albania, a part of the Turkish Empire, was earmarked for partition among them. Its newly won rights of autonomy were about to be shattered.

At this point Albanian nationalist headquarters in Bulgaria, Rumania, and Egypt modified their old ideology and came forward with the demand of "Independence for Albania." This slogan was not accepted by the Massachusetts leaders. Faik Konitza and Fan Noli maintained that Turkey, although hard pressed, would never be beaten by the Balkan allies. Moreover, they were unwilling to believe that Austria's vague sympathy for Albania would mature into concrete political action. For the sake of Albanian autonomy the Massachusetts leaders proposed to pledge their moral and even military aid to Turkey. On October 7, 1912, *Vatra* called a mass meeting of patriotic Al-

banians at Phoenix Hall, Boston, where dismayed representatives from all the New England states listened with incredulity as their leaders demanded support for Turkey.

The next day the Boston *Herald* reported part of the speech of the Reverend Naum Cere, chairman of the meeting: "Turkey, by granting to the Albanian insurgents their demands, made the national existence of Albania a possibility. This development meant a deadly blow to the encroaching ambitions of the Balkan states. . . . Therefore our interest evidently lies in a hearty co-operation with the Turkish army against the enemies of the empire, who are chiefly the enemies of Albania. . . . United with Turkey, Albanians need not fear their crafty neighbors, whom the glittering of the Turkish bayonets will scatter to the four winds. Turkey has real generals who have learned the art of fighting in the battlefields, and know how to win. The generals of our enemies are circus generals who know only how to parade, and when necessary, how to run away." The Reverend Naum Cere proposed to go as chaplain with Albanian volunteers from this country to join the Turkish army. Needless to say, Albanians were not eager to enter the Turkish ranks, and none did.

The Balkan allies scored a swift victory against the Turks and within a few weeks the conquering armies overran most of Albania. To forestall partition of the country, Vatra called a mass meeting in Boston on November 17, 1912. Faik Konitza, the principal speaker, acknowledged Turkey's defeat: "Turkey is humbled and Albania is invaded and in danger of being partitioned. What are we going to do, we the nationalist Albanians, to save our country?" Resolutions were passed pledging Vatra's financial resources to save the homeland. Cables asking that partition be prevented were sent to the emperors of Austria and Germany, the king of Italy, the pope, the Russian and French foreign offices, and President Taft.

In Albania more militant counsels prevailed. On November 28, 1912, Albanian nationalists under Ismail Kemal Bey declared their country independent. The red and black double-eagled flag

which the *chete* of volunteers of 1911 had brought with them from Boston was hoisted in Valona as the symbol of Albania's freedom. For the first time since 1467 their country was free from Turkish rule; a provisional government was set up at Valona with Ismail Kemal Bey as its president.

When news of the proclamation of independence reached Boston, Faik Konitza, as Vatra's spokesman, cabled a warning to the national assembly at Valona. "The Pan-Albanian Federation of America (Vatra) sends the warmest felicitations for your initiative on this occasion which history will never forget. Vatra begs the Assembly to avoid accepting a Mohammedan prince. Do not make the Albanian state like Khiva, Bokhara, Afghanistan, and Tunis. Our ideal is a European Albania like Norway, Denmark, Holland, or Belgium; therefore we strongly advise the selection of a decent European prince from a royal house, who will bring into Albania western culture and traditions. The undersigned especially begs the Mohammedan members of the Assembly to prove their patriotism by selecting for Albania a Christian prince. If we do otherwise we will be making an irreparable mistake."

Similar messages were sent to Albanian colonies in Rumania and Egypt urging them to support Konitza's proposal of a "decent European" prince. In the *Dielli* of December 6, 1912, Konitza expatiated in greater detail upon his objections to a Mohammedan prince. In concluding his argument he admonished his countrymen in these curt terms: "Let them read carefully my reasons, let them weigh them, let them do as they please, and then I want to wash my hands once for all."

The last phrase was perhaps rhetorical; it would have been difficult for Konitza to "wash his hands" of the Albanian situation. While the conquering Balkan states scoffed at the idea of an independent Albania, Vatra continued its activities to maintain Albania's territorial integrity. Though some of the Boston leaders had been afraid to join in the cries for complete freedom,

once it was proclaimed they willingly contributed American dollars to assure the permanence of the new state.

At this point the European powers intervened to settle the Albanian question. Their solicitude is explained by Sir Edward Grey in Volume I of his memoirs, *Twenty-Five Years, 1892-1916*. "Austria was determined that if Albania ceased to be Turkish territory it should not pass into the hands and form part of the aggrandizement of Serbia. Serbia, borne on the tide of her own victories, might easily reach the point of inevitable conflict with Austria. If this happened, and if Russia felt that she was required to support Serbia, European war was inevitable. To prepare in advance against this danger, and to avoid catastrophe I proposed a Conference of the Powers. . . ."

The conference was held in London under the chairmanship of Sir Edward, British Foreign Secretary at the time, and was attended by the ambassadors of Germany, Austria, Russia, France, and Italy. When it convened most of the powers had already accepted Albanian independence in principle. The paramount issue was the boundary question.

Vatra deluged the dignitaries with cables and memoranda proclaiming the national rights of the Albanian people. So numerous were these appeals that Grey is said to have remarked to a "friend of Albania" in London, "Tell the Albanians in Boston not to spend so much money on cables. We know that the city of Korcha and its districts—so much coveted by the Greeks—is Albanian." But the Massachusetts Albanians did not relinquish their efforts; Vatra sent Noli and Konitza to Europe to represent their American countrymen in person. From this center of negotiations, the leaders instructed Albanian headquarters in Boston on further tactics.

On December 20, 1912, after a long diplomatic drama, the Albanian provisional government was finally recognized by the Conference of Ambassadors; and in May, 1913, Albania was established as an autonomous principality under international guaranty. In the fall of that year an international commission

was dispatched to Albania to settle its boundaries. The northern frontier demarcating the new state from Montenegro and Serbia was a compromise between Russia, protector of the Slavic nations, and Austria, which was determined to clip their wings. As ultimately drawn, the boundary sacrificed about a million Albanians to the Slavic states. In the south, dispute raged chiefly over the two provinces of Korcha and Argyrocastra. These districts, according to Albanian nationalists, were the heart of their country; but they were held by Greece, and Greece was prepared to unleash her best propagandist talent to prove her right. Vatra, with thousands of Greek Orthodox Albanians hailing from the disputed areas, intervened to enlighten international opinion on the justice of Albania's claim. Finally, on December 17, 1913, the commission issued its report, later known as the Florence Protocol. The two regions were awarded to Albania, though over three hundred thousand Sons of the Eagle were left within Greece. Substantially, the commission had drawn Albania's boundaries as they exist today.

Again, as in the days of the Young Turks' revolt, new vistas of freedom opened before Massachusetts Albanians. The national dream was now embodied in living institutions. At Vatra's annual convention in Boston in July 1913, general elation possessed the local Albanians. Besides official delegates from branches of Vatra, hundreds of Albanians from all over New England came to Boston for the Fourth of July, celebrating two declarations of independence simultaneously. Visitors and delegates spent hours in the transplanted Balkan atmosphere of local coffee-houses, joyfully discussing the future of their country. At the convention Christo A. Dako was elected president of Vatra and editor of *Dielli*. In the following years these Boston assemblages were repeated, and they came to assume the character of national parliaments for the Albanian community in New England.

In Europe, following the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors, the great powers were besieged by the Albanian provisional government with requests for a European princelet to

head the new state. Only nominally interested, the powers side-stepped the issue, leaving the matter to Austria and Italy. On December 13, 1913, after much bickering, the almost unknown Prince of Wied, a captain in the Prussian army, was chosen Albania's new monarch. On March 7, 1914, the booming of cannon in the harbor of Durazzo announced the final fulfilment of the Albanian patriot's dreams. William of Wied had arrived to become Albania's new ruler.

Throughout the spring and summer of that year, Albanian migration was reversed, for there was a constant flow of returning natives eager to serve as volunteers in their new king's national guard. In recognition of the part which Vatra had played in winning Albanian independence, its members were given special consideration in the choice of offices. The American immigrants back in their homeland were looked upon as men who had already experienced freedom, men whose ways were to be imitated.

Unfortunately, the stripling government could not call upon trained officials. Successful nationalist agitators did not always make efficient bureaucrats, and foreign intrigue continued to harass the little state. Hardly had it learned to babble its way through governmental forms when the World War tore into the Balkans. The imported king abandoned the country; Albania was again invaded by foreign armies. In this no-man's-land, all semblance of national independence disappeared.

Albanians the world over were dejected to see their new state disintegrate, but they could do nothing until international order was restored. During the war many groups of Albanians in Massachusetts kept alive the symbols of devotion to their native land as they busied themselves with preparations for a time when they would be called upon to serve her. Military corps, *trupat vulnetare*, were organized in Boston; halls were rented; three and four times a week young men in all parts of New England met for military training and performed their simple maneuvers on floors more accustomed to dancing feet. To help the rookies, the commanding officer, Akif Permeti, prepared a forty-two page

military manual. Far from the scene of war, the trappings of Albanian independence, the national colors and the uniforms, were preserved.

At this time new leaders appeared among Massachusetts Albanians, at times to challenge the position of the nationalist veterans. Chief among these newcomers was Constantine A. Chekrezi. Like many of the local leaders, Chekrezi had been educated in Greek schools and his early leanings had been pro-Greek; but after the proclamation of Albanian independence, he threw himself into the nationalist movement abroad and became one of its most fervent supporters. For more than a year he had served as interpreter to the Albanian International Commission of Control which the six great powers sent to Albania in 1913 to administer the affairs of the young state. With the outbreak of the World War, members of the commission returned to their respective countries, and Chekrezi, out of a job, left Albania. He was wandering about in Naples when Vatra decided to summon him to Boston. By this time the membership of Vatra had grown sufficiently to support *Dielli* as a daily rather than a weekly. Chekrezi, placed in charge of the paper, reorganized it. His editorship did not last long, however, because of the re-appearance of the Reverend Fan Noli in 1915, fresh from sundry European conferences on behalf of the Albanians. Chekrezi, no longer in favor, followed Konitza's example and took a Harvard degree. During the war he initiated in Boston a publication called *Illyria*, which lasted only from March through November 1916.

Noli was easily able to reaffirm his dominance over Vatra. Though there was a faction of his countrymen who regarded him as pro-German and feared lest an Allied victory endanger Albania's cause, Noli continued to exercise his religious and political functions. The pro-German bias of many Albanian nationalists in the early years of the World War was comprehensible. Although the German Prince William of Wied, six months king of Albania, had fled the country in September 1914,

he had never officially abdicated, and members of Vatra still considered him a champion of their cause, a symbol of Albanian unity. They had not forgotten that Albanian independence was secured in 1912 largely through the efforts of Austria and Germany.

The bewilderment of the World War period and the multiplicity of political alternatives among which an Albanian nationalist could choose brought forth serious contenders for Noli's power. One of the most profound and extravagant figures to lead a splinter group of nationalists was Christo Dako, former president of Vatra. First educated in Bucharest, world center of Albanian nationalists, he had come to America in 1907 to continue his studies. For a while he devoted himself to theology at Oberlin College. During his first summer in America, he turned to his people in Massachusetts, and in 1908 he became one of the pioneers in the movement for the spread of education among his compatriots. In the short-lived period of enthusiasm which followed the Young Turks' revolt of 1908, he returned to his homeland. But he soon made his way back to Oberlin, where he took a master's degree in 1913. After a few months with the Boston branch of Vatra he left for two years of wandering from one nationalist center to another in Albania, Rumania, and Bulgaria. As he came to know veterans of the cause in Europe, he gradually developed a plan for the coordination of all Albanian patriotic societies on both sides of the Atlantic. He was opposed to a Vatra exclusively for America and to the society's individualistic role in the general movement. And to assure the international unity for which he yearned, he proceeded to form a rival group in Massachusetts.

Dako's group set out to undermine Noli's dominant position. When a nationalist movement begins to break into rival factions, it is often difficult to identify the precise points of difference. All groups seem to talk the same language and yet they war bitterly upon each other. So with the struggle between Noli and Dako. Essentially their objectives were the same: they had the same

antagonists, used the same epithets, appealed to the same emotions. The real issue was a matter of tactics. Dako's movement was born out of the desperation that had overwhelmed many Albanian patriots. Since 1912, Greek irregulars had terrorized and pillaged the Albanian countryside. After the outbreak of the war, every pretense of organized national government had vanished, and Albania's cause seemed hopeless. Nationalist leaders were scattered among Balkan capitals. The warring Balkan governments could be expected to restrain any overt unified action across their borders by Albanians, especially since their interests in the Albanian question were vitally divergent. In these circumstances, Dako reverted to the time-honored device of the secret society. An international movement could hardly have been maintained on any other basis—and Dako was committed to the international idea. He was not the author of the conception. The militant Albanian leader, Themistokli Germeni, whose headquarters were in Sofia, had for years been struggling to form an international underground society. An intimate friend of Germeni's, Dako intended to draw American Albanians into the Sofia leader's organization.

Germeni's inside knowledge of the Macedonian *comitadji* had taught him the most refined Carbonarist arts; and Dako proposed to transplant them to Massachusetts. Members were enlisted in groups of three; no one group was supposed to be aware of the identity of other groups. To satisfy a craving for leadership in these cells, each one of the members of the triumvirates was made an officer—secretary, treasurer, or president. Clandestine meetings were held. Terrorist purposes were avowed: all persons who opposed the society's version of nationalistic aspirations were to be destroyed. Dako's group followed the pattern of revolutionary intrigue frequently associated with attempts to overthrow despotic regimes where open opposition is stifled.

For a time the society had considerable support among Massachusetts patriots. Dako's record as a nationalist was unimpeachable; his international connections gave him prestige. Had he not

been a Protestant, some people think that his faction might have had even greater success. As it was, the society carried out none of its avowed objectives and Dako failed to take possession of Vatra. Noli's influence remained intact.

Unsuccessful in politics, Dako turned again to education, the field where he had previously made his major contribution. Assisted by his wife Sevasti and his sister-in-law, Miss Parashkevi Kyrias, he embarked upon a number of educational ventures. Their center of activities was their home in Jamaica Plain (Boston). They prepared an elementary grammar, *Gramatike Elementare*, a simple arithmetic book, *Arithmetike Pratiqe*, and several easy readers. In 1917 they published a monthly magazine on education called *Ylli I Mengjezit* (Morning Star). American subscribers could find articles written in English alongside those in Albanian. The late Charles R. Crane, a Chicago philanthropist who was at one time American minister to China, turned over to the Dakos a small trust fund, which was used to finance the education of a number of their compatriots. Dako remains a difficult character to evaluate. The combination of secret societies and a belief in "direct action" with his educational and philanthropic enterprises is confusing. He has left behind him a contradictory legend. There are those who damn him and those who revere him as a true patriot.

With the entrance of the United States into the World War, Vatra and the Massachusetts leaders made a hasty about-face, abandoning their pro-German sympathy. They became convinced that the cause of the Central Powers was doomed. President Wilson's declarations about a "war to end war" and "the self-determination of nations" encouraged oppressed peoples to hope for justice in the peace settlement. Vatra became a militant advocate of the Allied cause. Its members subscribed to the war loans, and the Reverend Fan Noli made the circuit of military camps in Massachusetts delivering fiery speeches to the dough-boys.

Soon after the Armistice was signed, Baron Sonnino, then

Italian Foreign Minister, invited a group of Albanian leaders to discuss their national problem. The group included Mehmet Konitza, brother of Faik Konitza and Vatra's chief delegate in Europe since 1916; Turhan Pasha, an aged official of the Porte; Myfid Libohova; and Dr. Mihal Turtulli. It was decided that a government should be set up in Albania to represent the country abroad and maintain order at home. On December 25, 1918, a national congress was hurriedly assembled at Durazzo, and a provisional government, with Turhan Pasha as president and Prenk Bib Doda, leader of the Roman Catholic tribes, as vice president was formed. Through Mehmet Konitza, Vatra was represented in this government.

The months that followed were crucial in Albania's history. There was no assurance that the Allied Powers would support the Albanian claims, or ignore the secret Pact of London of 1915, by which most Albanian territory was to be portioned out among Italy, Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro. Would the pressure of Albanian patriots amid the swarming nationality groups which besieged the conference at Paris be sufficient to safeguard Albania's existence? Vatra sent Mehmet Konitza to the conference as its chief delegate, and appointed several others to assist him. It appealed to its members for a national fund to help fight the cause in conference rooms and on council tables. Many Albanian laborers had saved tidy sums while working in American war industries, and their response was impressive. The owner of a small variety store in Boston gave \$500; two workmen in the Fore River Shipyards at Quincy contributed \$360 each. In all, \$150,000 was raised in Albanian settlements throughout the United States. Part of the money was sent to Vatra's representatives in Paris; the rest was used for various purposes, including the issue of an English monthly, the *Adriatic Review*.

This magazine, which was published in Boston, played a modestly important role in the post-war battle of conflicting propaganda machines or "informational services." It was sent to government officials and prominent personages in the United States

with the hope that some of the points made on behalf of an independent Albania might ultimately seep through to Woodrow Wilson, considered the final arbiter of the territorial settlement in Paris. Original articles by "friends of Albania" appeared beside reprints from the world press favorable to the cause. Articles turned on President Wilson's slogans, "self-determination" and "government by the consent of the governed."

Vatra was not the only American Albanian influence at Paris. In 1918 Christo Dako, having abandoned hope of capturing Vatra, formed a parallel organization at Worcester, the Albanian National party. The "political party," as it became known among Albanians, was an open pressure group similar in conception to Vatra. Mrs. Dako was made president. The party published a journal of its own and sent its emissaries to the Peace Conference. Its chief agent was Ismail Kemal Bey, Albania's first president in the provisional government of 1912; Miss Kyrias, Mrs. Dako's sister, also served on the delegation. In the name of the Albanian National party the Dakos sent memoranda to President Wilson, to the State Department, and to the foreign offices of the principal Allied governments. The titles of these memoranda, subsequently printed in pamphlet form, are self-explanatory. *Albania's Rights, Hopes and Aspirations* by Mrs. Dako and Dimitri Bala, and *Albania's Rights and Claims to Independence and Territorial Integrity* by Mr. Dako and Mihal Grameno gave brief pictures of Albania's history and pleaded that justice be done to that country. Dako and Grameno closed their plea with the words: "To mighty, just, and freedom-loving America falls the task, yea the honor, of defending the right claims of this friendless nation that it may enjoy the right of developing freely and peacefully a civilization of its own."

At least three other Albanian delegations were present at Versailles. One group was led by Turhan Pasha, the head of the Albanian provisional government operating under Italian influence. Another group was sent by Albanian nationalists from Constantinople. A third was led by Essad Pasha, remembered as

the opponent of the first Albanian provisional government in 1912. Except for Essad Pasha's unpopular and more or less ostracized group, the various delegations showed at times some capacity for cooperation. They even appointed a leader—Turhan Pasha—to be their spokesman. But their daily bombardments of the peace-makers so often worked at cross-purposes that the secretariat of the conference finally sent each of the groups a circular letter imploring them to present some unified plan—for filing purposes.

The main task of the Albanian nationalists at the conference was to combat the maneuvers of interested states to split up the Albanian nation, as it had been established by the Florence Protocol. None of the Albanians entertained any hope of extending their country beyond the frontiers of 1913: it was difficult enough to prevent partition. In addition to the secret Pact of London of 1915, which the Bolsheviki had made public in 1917, there was the Tittoni-Venizelos Agreement of 1919, proposing to divide southern Albania between Greece and Italy. Not until January 1920 did the terms of this treaty become known to Albanians. Yet Greek claims had already cast their shadow upon the efforts of Albanian nationalists at the conference. The Pan-Epirotic Union organized in 1918 among pro-Greek Albanians of Massachusetts had forcefully sponsored the cession of southern Albania to Greece. In May 1919 the union sent the Peace Conference a long memorandum signed by several thousand natives of Korcha and Argyrocastra. In the name of the petitioners the powers were beseeched to place these districts under Greek sovereignty. Vatra was characterized in the document as an organization controlled solely by Mohammedan Albanians; it was intimated that Vatra's chief sponsors were the defunct Austrian Empire and Italy. The territory in question was the same disputed area about which Vatra had undertaken to enlighten international public opinion on the eve of the boundary settlement of 1913. Again it set to work with undiminished zeal. This time 3,255 "Christian signatures" were gathered in the disputed provinces. These were

affixed to a vitriolic attack upon the Pan-Epirotic Union and forwarded to Versailles.

For the purpose of acquainting the general public with Albania's claims to independence, two prominent members of the Massachusetts patriotic movement published books in 1919. Constantine Chekrezi's *Albania Past and Present*, with an introduction by Professor Charles D. Hazen of Columbia, was the first of these works, and probably the first English book on Albania by an Albanian. The second was Christo Dako's *Albania, the Master Key to the Near East*, which was dedicated to his benefactor, Charles R. Crane, and included a foreword by Professor Richard Gottheil of Columbia. Dako's book is a detailed history of Albania up to 1914, with an abundance of information about Mr. Dako's personal life woven into the narrative. Like Chekrezi's work it had a large circulation.

This type of propaganda, in addition to the verbose memoranda sent by Vatra and the vague "influences" exerted by the organization's representatives, helped thwart the pretensions of Albania's neighbors at Versailles. Signal aid came from President Wilson, who was perhaps the only friend of Albania at the conference. In 1919 the Albanian nationalists issued a suggestion—said to have been inspired by Mehmet Konitza—that America should be given a mandate in Albania under the League of Nations. Impractical as was this proposal, the confidence of Albanians in the American president proved amply justified in January 1920. On the fourteenth of that month, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Francesco Nitti agreed upon a final settlement of the Albanian question: Yugoslavia, Greece, and Italy were to be awarded almost the whole of the country, while a small slice was to be left as an autonomous principality under Italian mandate. The plan was tabled when President Wilson stubbornly refused to countenance it. It was the last move against Albanian nationalism at Versailles. The conference disbanded without having made any significant alteration in the boundaries established by the Florence Protocol. By default Albania had reconquered its independence.

Praktike I.

Sot të gjashkën e Vieshtis I u fillua
 prej Shqipëtarëve Orthodoxë të Amerikës Vllhu-
 zënia kishitare me emërinë "hënt-gjergji"
 me prejardhje të përmatë
 Anëtarët që
 nën zgjedhjen
 MOT I DYTE.
 Del Per Jave.

SECOND YEAR.
 Published Weekly.

Kombi

The Only Organ of the Albanians in America.
 BOSTON, MASS. DECEMBER 30, 1907

Gni detyrë

Ne jemi...
 (Text continues in Albanian script)

Persë u trane ushtaret e Halldupit ne Mai te Xi?

Që munda të shprehim...
 (Text continues in Albanian script)

Mot i pare
 Del Per Jave
 PRI AL TUNOMIA



First Year.
 Published Weekly
 ALBANIA

The Strength of the National Consciousness of the Albanian People

Recently in the East...
 (Text continues in English)

Program i "Dielli"
 (Text continues in Albanian script)

ALBANIA'S
 Rights and Claims to Independence
 and
 Territorial Integrity
 Te Drejtat dhe Kerkimet e Shqiptarëve
 per
 Independence dhe Territorial e Vendlit

TOWARD ALBANIAN INDEPENDENCE

CHAPTER III

NINETEEN-TWENTY AND AFTER

MEANWHILE Albanian nationalists had become increasingly disturbed by the multiplication of what seemed to be conspiracies against their interests. The devious negotiations at the Peace Conference had gradually undermined their confidence in the intentions of the powers. So far, none of the proposals to partition Albania had been accepted, but the *de facto* situation was far from reassuring. The weak provisional government in Albania had remained under Italian influence since its establishment in 1918. Italian armies were occupying a large part of the country. When the details of the Tittoni-Venizelos Agreement were published in January 1920, this fresh revelation of impending dismemberment roused Albanian nationalists to take their fate into their own hands. A congress—the first truly national Albanian congress—was summoned in the obscure town of Lushnja. Freeing themselves for a moment from internecine squabbles, the Albanian representatives who convened on January 21, 1920 resolved to create a strong central government. They were now determined to liberate their country from foreign influence by their own efforts. It was a courageous decision: at the time the very town where they were meeting was in the hands of the Italians.

In the face of a common enemy the Albanians proclaimed *Besa* (honor), calling a halt to all blood feuds. They then proceeded to draw up a constitution providing for a parliamentary republic. Tirana was chosen as the capital of the new government. A council of regency was elected, composed of one representative from each of the four major religious groups: the

two Mohammedan sects, *Bektashi* and *Sunni*, and the two Christian churches, Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic. These four men organized the executive branches of the government in Tirana. One appointment which they made was ominous for the existence of the young republic. This was the choice of twenty-four-year-old Ahmed Zog as minister of the interior, an office which carried with it control of the armed forces of the nation.

The Treaty of Versailles had left many loose ends in the complicated political sector of the Balkans. One of the major tasks facing the new government was the elimination of remnants of foreign armies still within the borders. Only after months of guerrilla warfare were the Italian troops ousted. The signature of the treaty with Italy on August 2, 1920, providing for the evacuation, was hailed as the first diplomatic pact between Albania and a foreign power.

The final block in the structure of Albanian independence was placed on December 17, 1920, when Albania was admitted into the League of Nations. While France backed up the protests of Greece and Yugoslavia that Albania was not a well-defined political entity, England, with Lord Robert Cecil as her principal spokesman, helped push through Albania's election. Entrance into the League, fountainhead of world optimism in those days, elated the Massachusetts Albanians. When they had first set foot on American soil, their national identity had not even been recognized by the immigration officials. Now they felt that they belonged to a nation received as an equal by the great powers of the earth. For more than two decades the immigrant mill hands and shopkeepers had regularly contributed from their meager earnings to the national cause. Reflecting upon their progress from an oppressed subject people within the Turkish Empire to membership in the new world League, they congratulated themselves that their sacrifices had not been in vain.

Already the Albanians of Massachusetts had begun to play a prominent role in the direction of the affairs of the new state. Vatra, at its Boston convention in July 1920, had unanimously

elected Fan Noli deputy from America to the Albanian Parliament. Mr. Chekrezi, former editor of *Dielli*, became Albanian high commissioner to Washington, where, because of the emptiness of the Albanian state treasury, he had to live on the bounty of Vatra. So long as her status as a nation remained uncertain, Albania found it impossible to borrow money through normal channels. In this predicament she begged her American sons to continue their remittances to the Old Country. In late summer of 1920, when his Excellency Midhat Bey Frasheri, Albanian minister of finance, wanted to negotiate a loan, he had to appear in Boston to float it through Vatra.

As their dream of a national homeland seemed about to be realized, many American Albanians withdrew their savings from local banks and took passage to Albania. The first to go were several hundred young men who during the war period had trained themselves in Massachusetts halls for just such a contingency. They set sail under the leadership of their national commander, Akif Permeti, accompanied by Vatra's band, which was eventually to become the national band of Albania. With less fanfare but equally high hopes thousands of other immigrants—factory workers, fruit peddlers, small businessmen of every description—joined the procession back to the homeland. In the years from 1919 to 1925 between 20,000 and 30,000 Albanians returned to the Old Country.

Their first years in the homeland were in most cases happy ones. Political jobs were parceled out to any American who could show that he had been an active member of Vatra. Under the guidance of Vatra, former Massachusetts workers prepared to reconstruct the country. It was a formidable task, for the land had been pitilessly devastated by invading armies during the World War and the preceding Balkan wars; in 1913 and 1914 Greek irregulars alone had burned more than four hundred Albanian towns and villages. Although shocked by the extent of the destruction, Massachusetts Albanians were not dismayed. Back in Albania among their compatriots, the *Amerikani* took

on something of the swagger of the New World, where progress and getting things done were supposed to be taken for granted. In 1921 Fan Noli, representative of Vatra, became the leader of the parliamentary forces striving to introduce democratic government and social reform.

The glowing dreams of the returned Albanians were soon to be dissipated. Though the Congress of Lushnja in 1920 had clearly manifested its will to establish a progressive republic, a powerful alliance was soon arrayed against the proposals of the *Vatrani* and *Amerikani*. Anxiety lest democratic forces interfere with the traditional exploitation of the peasantry prompted Turcophile beys and Hellenophiles of the middle class to sink their differences and unite under the leadership of Ahmed Zog. As this group came into the ascendancy, the welcome that had at first been extended to the *Amerikani* rapidly chilled. Returned natives found themselves ridiculed for their "visionary notions" and discriminated against in governmental circles. Pains were taken to remind them that they were only peasants, despite their American ways and their pretensions to worldly wisdom. They were warned that they had better "look to which side their bread was buttered on." They became the butt of jokes, vicious, but often true: "So you dish-washers from America want to get the better of us, eh? . . . Tell me, my American, why do you carry those pens in your coat pocket when you do not know how to write your name? . . . Bah! These smart Americans! Donkeys of burden in America. . . . Peasants you were and peasants you remain!" The reactionaries aroused religious prejudice against American Albanians by branding them adherents of the Masonic heresy. On one occasion, when Bishop Noli was about to officiate at religious services in a cathedral at Korcha, the Greek clergy circulated the rumor that Noli wore a false beard. "I tell you I saw this with my own eyes!" ran the rumor. "While he was in the vestry, mumbling his hypocritical and ungodly words, the beard came off! What is one to expect from a man with a false beard! I ask you, can holy services be carried on by

the servants of the Lord without a real beard?" Noli was even accused of being a "Bolshevist priest."

Fan Noli's parliamentary oratory, replete with democratic slogans, was profuse, and his speeches had a familiar ring about them. The returned *Amerikani* had read such orations in *Kombi* or in *Dielli*; they had heard them during American election campaigns. In Tirana the speeches still sounded well enough, but they were ineffectual against the beys, who had once again seized control of the country. Through the efforts and sacrifices of American Albanian workingmen and peasants in the homeland, Albania had been made free; but many an old patriot found himself querying, "Free from what and for whom? Free for the landowning beys!"

Many Albanians, disillusioned, returned to the United States, now determined to make America their permanent home. They felt they were not wanted in the homeland which they had struggled to free. They could not make a living in Albania. Accustomed to urban conditions, they were unable to readjust themselves to the rural life which they had abandoned two decades before. Some had even established little businesses in America and were homesick for friends they had left there. Those who had originally migrated alone now sailed back to America with their families. Whole villages were deserted except for a few old people. At least one-third of the returned immigrants went back to the New World; most of those who remained in the Old Country were Moslems. The latter held more land (peasant holdings) than the Christians, and were better equipped to return to farming. As Moslems, moreover, they had greater hope of winning favors from the new Albanian government. Besides, they had not prospered as well in America as the Christians; with few exceptions, they had remained factory hands or day laborers on construction gangs. The Moslem Albanians who had established successful businesses stayed in America.

Back in the United States, the Albanians revealed a profoundly changed attitude. Resolved to settle permanently, they now

sought to fit themselves into their adopted country. Bachelors sent for girls to come over as prospective brides. Or they made brief trips to Albania in search of mates, and brought them back to this country. In the decade from 1920 to 1930 the emigration of married and marriageable women from Albania exceeded that of males. Once his wife arrived, a man's decision to establish himself here was often followed by the purchase of property.

American Albanians had not completely severed their ties with the homeland. Although they no longer dreamed of settling down with their savings in the Old Country, they still wished to help in its reconstruction. They felt, however, that this aid should be confined primarily to the educational and cultural institutions which their country sorely needed. To this end, Vatra, under the leadership of Anastas Pandelev, began the publication of a series of textbooks prepared by C. A. Chekrezi. Thousands of these books, printed in Boston, were shipped to Albania at a nominal charge. In the hope of raising the economic level of their homeland without direct participation in its politics, American Albanians undertook to establish special trade relations between this country and Albania. Several thousand dollars were collected and a corporation was formed to foster an export and import business. Unfortunately the enterprise collapsed and the people who had invested in it lost their money.

At Vatra's annual convention in Boston in July 1921, Faik Konitza, who had been abroad since 1913, was elected the society's new president. During Konitza's eight years' absence, great changes had taken place among American Albanians. Vatra, which in 1913 had been an insignificant organization, by 1921 numbered some eighty branches throughout the United States and Canada. Many Albanians who had formerly worked for subsistence wages had acquired small businesses and were showing signs of prosperity. Family life was now replacing the once predominant bachelorhood of the community.

Konitza, returning to America, remained the same enigma to Albanians that he had been ever since he first joined the nation-

alist movement. In 1913, after a quarrel with Ismail Kemal Bey, then head of the Albanian provisional government, he had allied himself with the chieftain Essad Pasha, who had formed an opposition government in central Albania. Konitza had spent the World War years in Vienna, where he had lost contact with Vatra and become acquainted with Ahmed Zog. After the Armistice he had moved to Rome. In the summer of 1920 he had severely criticized the Albanian government for starting armed conflict with the remnants of the Italian army. Yet, despite his past deviations from Vatra's official policies, its members recalled his many services to Albania, respected his cultural attainments, and elected him their president.

Undoubtedly many who supported Konitza's elevation to the presidency expected him to reflect their own altered attitude toward the homeland. Extension of cultural aid to Albania and formulation of plans for helping local compatriots adjust themselves to the American pattern of life: this was the program upon which a large sector of Vatra's rank and file desired to concentrate. Quite different was Konitza's purpose, as events soon proved. Under his editorship, *Dielli*, organ of Vatra—far from renouncing politics—launched an open attack against the landed aristocracy and its supporters, in favor of Fan Noli, who in Albania remained active leader of the opposition.

Konitza embarked upon his campaign with an unequivocal announcement in *Dielli*: "Vatra has now opened warfare against Albania's internal enemies, against those who are enemies of freedom. . . . Albania has fallen into bad hands, into the hands of those who have never wished for her welfare, who always fought against the national cause under the Turks. The majority of those who now fill government positions were formerly tools of Turkey and have always tried to skin the poor. Vatra is not going to surrender its struggle until it wipes away the injustices committed in Albania against the people. Vatra is going to strive, as it has always done, for a civilized and cultured Albania." To encourage a militant spirit among his followers, Konitza intro-

duced into *Dielli* new propagandistic devices, including political cartoons satirizing Albanian government officials. More than past presidents he seemed to impose his own policies upon Vatra. Without such methods it would perhaps have been impossible to carry out a spirited political campaign, at a time when many members of the rank and file were suffering from past disappointments over the course of events in Albania. Yet, at least in certain quarters, his attempts to quell dissension apparently only served to increase antagonism to his rule. The conflicts which resulted sowed confusion and bitterness among American Albanians. Vatra was sued for libel because of articles published in *Dielli*; adverse judgments were returned against the organization, injuring its prestige and leading to a decline in its membership.

Meanwhile, in Albania, the struggle between the Liberal opposition and the government supported by landed aristocracy and middle class was rapidly mounting to a crisis. At the end of 1923, Fan Noli, as spokesman of the Liberals, demanded the calling of a new constitutional convention. The landed aristocracy, fearful lest they be ousted by a people's army if the Liberals were not appeased, submitted to an election on January 1, 1924. The elections were inconclusive. In the primary balloting, when the populace voted for delegates who in a later poll were to choose members of Parliament, victory went to the Liberals. In the secondary elections also, the Liberals won more parliamentary seats than any other single group: 35 out of 105. But the indirect electoral procedure had so whittled down their preponderance that the oppositional groups, by combining, were able to muster a clear majority. The support of the various anti-Liberal factions enabled Zog to continue in power.

In America, vehement protests were voiced over the results of the final elections. "The Liberal party is in the confidence of the people," said *Dielli*. "The primary elections proved its huge popularity. In due time this sympathy of the people (for the Liberal party) will become a weapon against the proprietors. In

the secondary elections we did not win because the government used force, terrorized the delegates and representatives . . . used religious propaganda . . ." In *Dielli* of February 15, 1924, Konitza analyzed the issues at stake in the party struggles, and in Vatra's name flung a sharp challenge at the "proprietors." "The party of the opposition (the Liberal party) is composed of citizens of humble means, the small farmers, people who are not rich landowners. The oppositionists, just like us (members of Vatra), are trampled under foot and beaten by the whip of the propertied classes. A minority of the Albanians has understood the reason for its sufferings, but the majority has not yet understood.

"The Albanians in America and their organization, Vatra, are men who have tasted enough freedom to enable them to understand the real reason for the sufferings of the people, and it is they who are leading the people's struggle. The proprietor class understands this and therefore it has decided to wage war against the Albanians of America and Vatra. . . .

"Vatra is and has been the champion of the people's rights. In Albania it has carried on the struggle under the banner of the Liberal party. . . . The Liberal party is the party of Vatra, because Vatra has supplied it with ideals, with leaders . . . with newspapers . . . with money to carry on the elections. . . ."

An attempt on Zog's life by an eighteen year old youth, Bekir Walter, heightened the tension between the rival Albanian parties. The necessity for some concession was recognized by the conservatives. Accordingly, on March 10, 1924, Zog retired in favor of a coalition cabinet headed by Vrioni and Verlatsi. Shefket Verlatsi was at the time Zog's prospective father-in-law; and the cabinet shifts resulted in no real change in the regime. Five days after the formation of this cabinet, Konitza, from his Boston office, wrote to the leader of the Constitutional Convention, declining the place which had been offered him as deputy from the city of Korcha. The letter was a blunt indictment of the convention and a Cassandran warning of the future. "The majority of the Albanian people," he wrote, "have shown plainly

that they want fundamental social changes. But the elections, held under the terroristic and murderous acts of the government, brought forth a majority which does not want any changes; it seeks only to protect the old social fabric which left the people in darkness and poverty. Such a body does not represent the people but only a class of parasites. For this reason I decline to accept a place in the Constitutional Convention. The evils which you are preparing against the people will fall upon your own heads. . . ." Meanwhile, Vatra increased its activities on behalf of a liberal Albania. Constantine A. Tashko traveled throughout the United States as organizer and propagandist, trying to keep the Albanians from losing heart. *Dielli* was officially banned in Albania, though its editor managed to smuggle it in, changing its name periodically.

The downfall of the Albanian government was soon precipitated by two widely publicized acts of terrorism. First came the murder of a pair of American tourists near the village of Mamurras. While this international incident was being protested by the American government, the Liberal deputy Avni Rustem was assassinated. The latter episode gave Fan Noli a chance to reawaken the discouraged liberals by a fiery oration over the victim's grave. With the army roused into action on behalf of the liberals, the aftermath of the murders was revolution. Bands of militiamen poured into Tirana from all over Albania. Within a fortnight, the Liberals had gained control of the capital; members of the overthrown government and their supporters had fled, some to Italy, others, including Zog himself, to Yugoslavia; and Fan Noli, former leader of Boston Albanians, had been proclaimed prime minister.

The new cabinet formed by Fan Noli announced a twenty-point program including agrarian reform, as well as a multitude of other changes deemed essential for the creation of a modern democracy. Nothing less drastic than the summary blotting out of Albania's age-old social ills, and the establishment of a model government based on the most enlightened practices of western

democracies could have satisfied the demands of this program. But the harassed Liberal government, wrestling with its heavy burden, had still another task: redemption of the national honor, which the murders at Mamurras had sullied. After bringing the alleged assassins to trial, the government, on December 18, 1924, sent an official cablegram to Vatra, informing it of the verdict. Four fugitives had been condemned to death; Ahmed Zog, also a fugitive, had been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment at hard labor. The American government was satisfied that justice had been done. Not so Faik Konitza, who criticized the Albanian government for what he termed its leniency to Zog. Konitza reopened the issue of the assassination and began to print in *Dielli* his satirical novel, *Dr. Gjelpëra Zbulon Renjet e Drameve të Mamurrasit* (Dr. Needle exposes the Roots of the Drama at Mamurras!).

Noli's regime lasted only six months, from June to December. On Christmas Eve, 1924, as Ahmed Zog approached with an army composed of Yugoslavs, remnants of General Wrangel's White Russian Army, and Albanian mountaineers, Noli fled the country. Zog's use of an army to recapture control was almost a superfluous gesture. Against the Liberal government, which had no means of fulfilling its vast ambitions, widespread reaction had already set in. Although Noli's party had balanced the budget and partially carried out many of its twenty points, it had neglected to hold an election after the overthrow of the previous regime. Still more important, it had failed to bring about agrarian reform. Noli has himself analyzed the causes of the Liberal debacle with some perspicacity in a letter to an English friend, John Swire: "By insisting on the agrarian reforms I aroused the wrath of the landed aristocracy; by failing to carry them out I lost the support of the peasant masses." Noli's departure ended the political seesaw in Albania.

During the Noli regime, the American Albanians had periodically issued friendly advice to the Liberal government. *Dielli*, on August 2, 1924, paternally reminded "the beloved bourgeois gov-

ernment . . . that promises should never remain mere words but that the program should be put into effect." As the months passed, *Dielli's* comments indicated a growing irritation and skepticism. But when news of the return of Zog reached Boston, the Massachusetts Albanians headed by Konitza made one last attempt to settle the turbulent affairs of the Old Country.

It was Konitza's hope that a compromise from afar might be engineered between Noli and Zog. To this end, on December 27, 1924, he sent the following cable addressed to Fan Noli at Valona, Albania: "In spite of the fact that the government headed by you has no relationship with Vatra, except the one connected directly with your person, and in spite of the fact that your government has refused its counsel and opposed its program directly and indirectly—in spite of these things—we support you and wish you success in your stand. However, we believe that nothing can be done because you have neither unity nor funds nor arms nor ammunition. Moreover, your government lacks a legal basis since you did not hold the June elections as we advised you . . . therefore, we take the liberty to propose to you a compromise with the *bashibazouks* [mercenaries] in order to save the country from a fatal civil war. This is especially timely since you know very well that the majority of your comrades have no higher political ideals than those of Zog and are no better than the comrades of Zog. . . ." The message, which closed with a concrete plan for compromise, never reached Noli because he had already embarked for Italy.

Simultaneously, a cablegram was dispatched by Vatra to Zog at Tirana, Albania. "The interests of our country compel us to cable you the following proposal. We have no connections with the government of Valona except through the person of Fan S. Noli. We go further and state that his government is not to our liking since it has opposed the purposes of Vatra even more decisively than your government. . . . In spite of the fact that we were, and still are, your opponents, we at the same time recognize your good points and believe that you have no desire to destroy

Albania. . . .” Then followed the same proposal which had been made to Fan S. Noli.

Vatra in Boston received a reply from Colonel A. Zog, “commander-in-chief of operations”: “We received your cablegram. We came to reestablish processes of law and order which had been dangerously disrupted in Albania. Our purpose is to neutralize the army and its functions so that it may no longer interfere in politics causing the complications which it has hitherto. . . . We do not refuse the counsel of sincere patriots because our ideal is to collaborate with all honest and respectable patriots for the creation of an independent and eternal Albania. When and if we act contrary to law or reason, then let them become our opponents. Long live Albania!” To which Vatra cautiously rejoined: “We thank you for your cable. We hope that your beautiful words will be turned into deeds; if they are turned into deeds, you will have no opponents.”

When news of this last message from Vatra spread through the local community, a large part of the rank and file felt bewildered and despondent. In recent years the confused pattern of Albanian politics had shifted so rapidly that many of them had been unable to follow events except through the interpretations offered by their leaders in America. Apart from Fan Noli, most of the personalities involved in the homeland battles were known to them only at second hand. Without the stimulus supplied by *Dielli* and the leaders of Vatra, their partisanship in the political upheavals agitating the Old Country would have been far less intense. If their emotions were keyed to expect a life-and-death struggle between “tyranny” and “progress,” it was largely because of the propaganda to which they had been subjected. But having learned to view Albanian politics in these simple, clear-cut terms, many found it impossible to follow their leaders in what seemed a complete reversal of former policy. A crisis occurred in the internal organization of Vatra. On January 8, 1925, through the columns of *Dielli*, Konitza presented his baffled compatriots with an explanation of his position. Couched in terms of disillu-

sionment, the *apologia* failed to convince many American Albanians, although it probably revealed the mood prompting Konitza's personal change of attitude. "What should we do?" he asked. "We can do either one of two things: on the one hand we can keep our peace; on the other, we can back up the new government [of Zog], not because of its program but in order to bring about peace and order. Those who claim that Zog is a traitor should look about and they will discover that the majority of Albanians might be described as traitors. I put forward the following thesis: a man who has the backing of the majority of the people has a right to rule that people. The Albanian people do not want reforms and reformers, they do not want new things, nor people who strive for new things."

For a few months, while the Zog regime was becoming consolidated in Albania, Vatra's future direction remained obscure. Officially the organization, with Konitza still at its head, opposed the Albanian government until the spring of 1925. Its last formal protest against the government's policies was drawn up on April 12, 1925, at a meeting held in Franklin Union Hall, Boston. On this occasion, identical resolutions were dispatched to the Albanian government and the League of Nations, criticizing among other things Albania's grant of concessions to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and its proposed cession of territory to Yugoslavia. Sharp but respectful was the reply sent by the Tirana government, through its press, to *Dielli*. Item by item the cable answered Vatra's charges, closing with a curt command: "We await the denial of these falsifications." Instead of apologizing, Vatra answered with a detailed catalogue of the Albanian government's errors and sins.

Despite these spirited beginnings, the controversy was to prove shortlived. The infant Albanian government, now embarking upon a period of relative internal stability, was to face its pressing foreign problems with little opposition from *émigrés* in America. While it jockeyed with English and Italian companies for the most advantageous disposal of its oil resources, the voice of Vatra

was quieted. During the summer of 1925, Fazlli Frasheri, Zog's personal envoy, arrived in Boston and talked with Konitza. Immediately Konitza ceased printing his provocative *Dr. Needle Exposes the Roots of the Drama at Mamurras*. He now shifted his batteries for an attack on Fan Noli, justifying himself privately by citations from Edmund Burke. "The Irish orator," explained Konitza, "had at first been in favor of the French Revolution, but when he noted the criminal acts of the revolutionists, perpetrated in the name of liberty, he turned against them." Other Albanians remained unpersuaded by the historical parallel. One group, formerly devoted to Vatra, deserted the old organization and founded the Sons of Albania, under Constantine Tashko, a Harvard man and one-time Albanian consul in New York. A weekly, *Idealisti* (the Idealist), was issued as the society's official paper. But soon the Sons of Albania became convinced of the uselessness of meddling in the internal politics of the homeland; the organization disbanded and *Idealisti* suspended publication.

In the summer of 1926, Konitza was appointed Albania's minister to Washington, a post which he still holds (1939). Before he left Boston to assume his new diplomatic duties, the bylaws of Vatra were revised. Now at last it was definitely decreed that the organization avoid meddling in affairs political. Provision was also made for the expulsion of any members who refused to abide by the society's official decisions. At about this time, a somewhat changed policy began to be noted toward American Albanians who proposed to revisit the homeland. Former supporters of Fan Noli were subject to special scrutiny when they applied for permission to return to the homeland; sometimes innocuous persons—elderly peasant mothers who had "dangerous" sons—were placed in the category of undesirables.

In Massachusetts, militant Albanian patriots were offered "friendly" advice by former associates in the nationalist movement. Counsels of discretion were doled out to the accompaniment of skeptical reflections; the possibility that politicians in Albania might wreak vengeance upon families and friends in the

homeland was suggested. "Ah, my friend, the poor and humble have a tough time of it! The wretched lords and rich of the earth always have ruled and will rule! You ask for proof? Well, dear friend, tell me, is there a nation or has there ever been a nation which struggled for freedom and got its freedom? You as well as I know that this never happened nor will it ever happen. Curse these rich! O God, please deliver us from their ugly clutches. Even the Lord, my dear friend, failed in his attempt to strike down the proud of the earth. When the Lord Jesus tried to humble the mighty, the rich, and the proud, what happened? He was crucified! There you are—what a wretched world! It does not pay to take up the fight against these jackals. As we say in the Old Country, 'One's frying pan will always be full if one minds one's own business.' It is useless, my friend, to go into battle unarmed. If we take up arms, the rope is ready for us! [Here the philosopher would interpolate some story of what happened to a "direct actionist."] But again, my friend, we have no leaders in the true sense of the word. Somebody just told me that one of our so-called leaders only recently cleaned out the treasury of our organization. Here is an example of what happens to our hard-earned dollars. These people are 'wolves in sheep's clothing'; I assure you, nothing can be done for us. Therefore, we should mind our own business and look after our families. Do you know that many of our rash brothers do not care what happens to their children in the Old Country? They talk mighty big and loud here but their families across the sea are keeping their mouths shut for fear something might happen to them." It is doubtful if these admonitions discouraged very many who might otherwise have remained militant. More important was the struggle for existence in their adopted country. Most Albanians now had their families with them in Massachusetts; and the business of earning a living, with a growing burden of personal cares, had its own way of dampening ardor for Old World politics. The beginnings of ordered domesticity in America were

conspiring with recent disappointments in the nationalist program to snuff out the patriotic movement.

In September 1928, when Zog proclaimed himself Zog I, king of the Albanians, *Dielli* wished him godspeed. An editorial in the issue of September 4, summed up the situation. "From the Congress of Lushnja (1920) to the present time there have been four different regimes in Albania. . . . In recent years the idea has begun to take root among the Albanians that the problem before the Albanian government was no longer a question of form. . . . The problem was essentially a financial one; how to develop the nation's resources, how to improve the prosperity of the people, so that the nation and the government could be put on a sound financial basis. How this problem may be solved by a change in the form of government we cannot understand. We believe, however, that the Constitutional Assembly had high patriotic reasons and has taken all these problems into consideration when it decided to change the regime from republic to monarchy. The Albanians of America, whose dollars play a prominent role in the prosperity of the nation and government, are eagerly awaiting the benefits which the changed regime will bestow upon the country, and hope that Albania will prosper more under the monarchy than it did under the republic." The Massachusetts Albanians could not share Konitz's optimism. But they had become so apathetic toward homeland politics that they failed to organize a single mass protest against the establishment of the monarchy.

When Fan Noli returned to Boston from Europe in 1930, he succeeded in rousing once again the dormant nationalist spirit of Massachusetts Albanians. Although he had failed to carry out his reforms in Albania, he was still the honored leader. Sufficient interest was reawakened to launch a newspaper, *Republika* (Republic), in opposition to *Dielli*, the organ of a transformed Vatra. *Republika* demanded: "(1) A republic and not a monarchy; because it has been proven that a republic in the broad and general form outlined by the Congress of Lushnja is better

fitted for Albanian needs than a monarchy with a German king (like Wied) or a mountain sultan (like Ahmed Zog); because a republic with its high council would cost Albania less than 250,000 gold francs, whereas the monarchy under Sultan Zog costs Albania some three millions in salary and some fifteen millions for the army that protects him. (2) A working people's government and not a government of the nobles. The nobles have been, and are today, the cause of all the country's miseries; yesterday and today these gentry have kept and are still keeping the people in darkness, slavery, and poverty—yesterday under the domination of Turkey, today under the yoke of Italy, because that is what their interests demand. In order that the people may be enlightened, freed, and enriched, they must take governmental power into their own hands, and with it, the land, the plantations, and the wealth of the country. (3) Independence and not a protectorate. Albania for Albanians and not for Italians. We want to be masters of our own land and not colonial slaves of Italy as the Arabs are in Tripoli. We want the land of Albania to belong to its people; we will not have it snatched away to be colonized by the Italians. For the Albanian people, national independence means life, Italian protectorate, death."

As soon as *Republika* was well under way, Fan Noli was forced to return to Europe because his six months' permit in the United States had expired. Arthur Tashko was left in charge as editor. Through the efforts of his followers, Fan Noli was finally granted permission by the Labor and State departments to reenter the United States as a permanent resident. Henceforth he took little active part in local Albanian politics. Without its leader *Republika* ceased publication in June 1932. Noli, back in Boston, but a sick, aging man, eventually made most of his flock understand that he was "out of politics." One group of his former followers, however, refused to abandon the fight against the Albanian government. Separating from the mother church in 1934, they founded St. John's Church, with Theodos Katundi as priest, to maintain a stronghold of opposition to the Zog regime. For a

brief period this group published a four page paper, *Liberatori* (the Liberator). Though the paper was soon abandoned, the opposition organization has continued in existence.

Since Vatra's reorganization, its membership had dwindled to a fraction of its former strength, and during the depression the society incurred debts. In January 1936 its principal creditor, George Prifti (honorary Albanian consul in Boston) finally foreclosed the mortgages which he held on its property. This action put a temporary halt to Vatra's activities. After an interlude of several months, some of the western branches of Vatra, led by the Detroit group, gathered sufficient strength to revive the organization. A delegation came to Boston and bargained with Prifti for release of Vatra's properties. He finally returned everything except the printing press of *Dielli*, which he later utilized to publish his own newspaper, *Bota* (World). In July 1936, at the annual Vatra convention in Boston, the branches voted to transfer the headquarters of the organization to Detroit and to issue *Dielli* there. Charging the western members with bad faith, Konitza ordered his loyal followers in Boston to establish a rival Vatra. An opposition *Dielli* was also issued in Boston under the editorship of Nelo Drizari. When King Zog's three sisters visited Boston in March 1938, an attempt was made to reconcile the two Vstras at a meeting held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. Delegates from the Detroit and the Boston Vstras were present, along with the royal *entourage*. Speaking in the King's name, Abdurahman Salih Mati, Zog's right-hand man, who was accompanying the princesses, expressed his desire that the two Vstras should unite and reestablish headquarters in Boston. April 24, 1938 was set for a joint convention, but at this convention no amicable settlement could be reached. There are still two rival Vstras.

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The greatest spiritual achievement of Massachusetts Albanians has undoubtedly been their struggle for an independent fatherland. It is not too much to say that the creation of the Albanian

state was largely their work. Throughout the course of the nationalistic movement, indispensable contributions were made by Albanian patriotic centers in Rumania, Bulgaria, Egypt, and Constantinople; they disseminated propaganda, educated leaders, and supplied ideas. But in the Near East, as well as in other European countries, the position of these alien nationalistic groups was always precarious: the countries which gave them asylum were too directly interested, had to be too cautious of possible repercussions, to allow them a free hand. Albanian patriots roamed from one Near East capital to another, a band of wanderers whose work was often interrupted almost as soon as it was begun. It was only in America that they could establish a mass movement and a permanent, solidly rooted organization. As much as freedom, the movement required money: this too could be obtained in America, by unlettered immigrants who elsewhere might never have earned a surplus above their most elementary needs. With adequate organization and financial resources, Albanian patriots in America were in a good strategic position to develop a propaganda machine. On the face of things, the capacity of a few tens of thousands of exiles to exert pressure upon the great powers seems highly problematical. But if they did nothing else, they kept alive a national consciousness. At crucial moments they knew how to remind European powers of its existence and to convey the impression that recognition of Albanian nationality was essential to any solution of the Balkan question.

Quite apart from this tremendous contribution to the movement for independence, Albania has been deeply influenced by the emigration of its sons to America. American ideas began to penetrate in the summer of 1908, with the first wave of migration back to the homeland. The Young Turk Revolution in July had lifted the ban on the Albanian language; and the returned natives came with stocks of books, newspapers, and magazines in the hitherto forbidden tongue. Besides reading matter, they brought other New World wonders: an American phonograph was taken

into the interior of the country, to the terror and delight of the peasants. Dollars kept pouring in from *émigrés* who had stayed in America. With money from exiled sons or husbands, peasant holdings were improved, houses were made more habitable. Many local societies were being formed in Boston and Worcester for the express purpose of financing useful construction in Albanian towns. Soon their remittances began to be turned into bridges, roads, schools, and town halls. Returned Albanians in western clothes inspired natives to imitate them, and *alla franga* appeared in the crooked lanes of inland villages.

After 1920 the American influence seemed for a time destined to transform the country. The scores of American Albanians who became government officials, deputies, prefects, subprefects, police commissioners, army officers, and school teachers under the republican regime served as ambassadors for the "American way." Even priests were imported from America, because of their patriotic training. A weekly newspaper, *Shqipëtar i Amerikës* (the Albanian-American) was established at Korcha by Vatra for the purpose of spreading political enlightenment. And the groundwork was laid for the present-day Albanian system of education by the foundation under American influence of three important schools. One of these, the Kyrias Institute for Girls at Tirana, was inaugurated by the Dakos and Mrs. Dako's sister, Miss Parashkevi Kyrias. Supported largely by the late Charles R. Crane, the Chicago philanthropist, the school did pioneering work for the instruction of girls until 1933, when it was closed. In 1922 Dr. C. Telford Erickson, an American missionary, who had served on Vatra's delegation at the Peace Conference, founded at Kavaja in central Albania the American-Albanian School of Agriculture and Domestic Science; this institution has been taken over by the Near East Foundation and is one of the best schools in the country. The American Technical School of Tirana was also established in the early 1920's under the sponsorship of the American Junior Red Cross. It provided simple tech-

nical education for hundreds of Albanian boys, and built the first electric and ice plants in Tirana. In 1933 it was turned over to the government.

Today at least a score of individuals in prominent governmental and teaching positions in the homeland are products of Massachusetts colleges and high schools. Local American Albanian groups are still remitting funds for the improvement of homeland villages, and aged parents in the Old Country are receiving support from kinfolk in Massachusetts towns. But when one recalls the indulgent preoccupation of earlier American Albanians with the welfare of their native land, the ties that now bind Massachusetts immigrants to the old country seem surprisingly weak. The contrast is too great to be explained solely by the betterment of their economic and social position in America. Reaction against their erstwhile leaders has probably played a part in the change. Among American Albanians may be found today many bitter idealists, who not only resent the present attitude of those leaders, but, in retrospect, accuse the whole patriotic movement of having gulled the popular cause. This was the reaction that followed in the wake of disappointment and frustration. Now that they have seen the issue of their struggles, they dislike to recall the mood of naive emotionalism in which they used to read *Dielli*, the *Adriatic Review*, and *Illyria*. The phrases that once inspired them to surrender their hard-earned dollars have a discordant ring. The Albania that "created the first culture in Europe, gave birth to Greek mythology, produced Pyrrhus, Aristotle, Alexander the Great, supplied Rome with illustrious emperors, saved Europe from the Turk, and made possible Greek emancipation" has become a dream. In their present reflective temper, they are inclined to blame the leaders who fed their hopes on romantic illusions, without guiding them to a saner appreciation of their own lot. Once they began to realize that their future lay in this country, rather than in Albania, they resented the failure of the "politicians" to help them adjust to the American scene. "Why did none of them ever offer us a critical

brochure on immigrant life?" asked one former Albanian patriot with perhaps a touch of hindsight. For in earlier years the dream of the American Albanian had been something different from adaptation to the New World.

Popular resentment against the leadership is also reflected in the dwindling circulation of Albanian journals. The younger people dislike them or are indifferent, and even the older generation is beginning to prefer American papers. Newspapers in English may seem alien to the American Albanian; they may contain little that vitally interests him; but at least they do not stir up old bitterness and futile hatreds.

For beneath their superficial apathy, many American Albanians have in recent years been outraged by prevailing conditions in the Old Country. They grievously resented the domination of their land by the Italians ever since the pact of amity known as the Treaty of Tirana (1926). The year following, under the guise of a mutual protection agreement, Italian interests were allowed to infiltrate the whole economic life of the country. The few roads which have been built were primarily for military purposes—the military purposes of Italy. Italians interfered even in determining the curriculum of elementary and secondary schools. But it would be incorrect to maintain that Zog was a mere puppet of the Italian government. Though he undoubtedly accepted subsidies from Mussolini, he was restive under the Italian yoke. Even if Zog had been willing to acquiesce in all the demands of the great power across the Adriatic, the native spirit of independence among his mountain tribesmen would have rebelled against complete subservience.

Among the great majority of Albanians, including opponents of the Zog regime, there still smoldered a strong irredentist sentiment for the "lost provinces" of Kossovo and Chameria, the first held by Yugoslavia and the second by Greece. The Munich Pact of 1938 reawakened this sentiment. While the hydra of the minorities problem was raising heads all over the Balkan peninsula, the Society of Chameria, composed of American Albanians

who came from that province, added its voice to the din. Petitions were dispatched to Chamberlain, Hitler, Mussolini, and Daladier complaining that "the overwhelming majority of its [Chameria's] inhabitants—our friends and relatives living in Chameria—are unwilling subjects of another nation and are convinced that the only orderly and decent way to maintain a friendly relationship with neighboring countries is through Albanian rule of this section." "In the name of the trust mandated to [them] by [their] people," the statesmen were implored to "consider" these injustices. Receipt of the petition was acknowledged only by Italy, which sent a non-committal reply through the Italian ambassador at Washington.

Under the pretext that Albania was in a state of internal chaos, Italian troops invaded the country on April 7th, 1939, landing at Durazzo under a protective barrage from battleships in the harbor. Mussolini was consolidating his control of the Adriatic. The warriors who dashed down from their mountain homes to defend the last vestiges of their country's independence were powerless against the fleet of Italian bombers and armored tanks. King Zog, his Queen, and their newborn heir, named Skander after the great fifteenth century hero, fled the country. Whether or not the nominal sovereignty of their old homeland is preserved, the American Albanians look back with sadness upon the destruction of their labors. Once again men who have devoted their energies and their substance to the ideal of a free Albania see their aspirations crushed by the foreign invader.

But the indomitable courage of this people has not been broken; neither in the Old World nor the New. On Easter Sunday, 1939, Albanian communities throughout America were seething with plans for the re-conquest of Albanian independence.

CHAPTER IV

STRIKING ROOTS

STEAMERS have ceased to range the Balkan ports bidding for immigrants; the loansharks of Albanian villages are no longer begged to advance passage money. The number of those who enter the United States within the immigration quota for Albania is negligible. Some quota-exempt wives, children, or aged parents are still brought over by Albanian-born American citizens, but they are merely the stragglers left behind in the rush of family immigration during the twenties. Only 222 Albanians were admitted in 1937.

The Albanian community in Massachusetts, after the endless comings and goings of the preceding decades, has become more or less fixed. The bachelor Albanian, wandering from one industrial town to another, is a figure of the past. Now that he has a home and family, he can no longer pack his valise whenever he hears rumor of better employment in another town.

In the first decades of the century, local Albanian colonies appeared and disappeared in rhythm with the rise and fall of shoe, rubber, or cotton factories. The shoe factories of Lynn, Natick, Marlborough, and Brockton once formed the nuclei of flourishing Albanian settlements; but during the twenties these colonies shrank, leaving only small groups of Albanian families which for better or worse had taken root. The Lynn colony, estimated at 600 in 1920, now numbers about 150 persons in 27 families; Brockton has about 25 Albanian families, totaling not more than 150 persons; and Natick about 200. In Marlborough there are still several Albanian stores, though the colony has dwindled to insignificance. In Hudson the Albanian settlement

which grew up around the rubber industry has fallen to about 75 members. A few Albanian farmers are scattered through Worcester County, particularly in the towns of Millbury, Sutton, Oxford, and Charlton; most of them are former mill hands who saved enough money to buy fruit orchards or truck farms. Apart from such isolated instances, the Albanians seem no more inclined to return to the soil today than in the early period of their immigration.

Massachusetts has three relatively large and stable centers in cities where Albanians have been drawn by more diversified opportunities for employment or by living conditions more to their liking. Greater Boston at present has about 6,000; Worcester, 2,000; Southbridge perhaps 800. These figures have been gathered from church records and fraternal organizations, or from information furnished by the Albanian communities; they include American-born children of Albanian parentage as well as immigrants. The Federal Census of 1930, which lists the total Albanian population of Massachusetts as only 2,938, takes account only of the foreign-born. Even so, the census figure is probably incomplete.

In Boston, the largest and poorest settlements are in the South and the West Ends. Many an Albanian lives there who once starved and stinted himself in a *konak* to send money back to the Old Country. He returned to Albania with sanguine hopes when Albania became a nation, but now he is once again in America, working in an iron foundry, a shoe factory, or a restaurant. About half of the Albanians in Massachusetts still have such jobs. Some of them have developed skills and earn relatively comfortable wages. In the Reed and Prince Screw factory in Worcester, which until very recently was a haven of refuge for Albanians, they became expert machine operators and practically dominated two entire departments. A number of them have become highly skilled mechanics in various Worcester machine shops. But many are still performing menial tasks, not very different from the jobs of the early Albanian immigrants in Worcester. The wages may

be a little higher, but the unskilled Albanian factory worker has lost something that buoyed up the pre-war immigrant when he left his *konak* to work in the dye houses of woolen factories or load trucks in the wire mill—the “vah mill” he called it. The \$10 a week that the more fortunate Albanian immigrants earned in those days was not the \$10 that a native American might receive for the same 60 hours of drudgery. It was 120 napoleons a year, as much as the prime minister of Greece was paid! It was money for a more pretentious house in Albania; it meant better food for the family back home. It was a stone in the structure of an independent Albania. Nowadays the unskilled Albanian worker earns perhaps \$15 a week. But with his family established here he has to think of what it will buy in American terms.

Some Albanians found they could buy more of what they wanted in a small city than in a large one, a discovery which seems to account for the growth of a substantial Albanian community in Southbridge. In the slums of Boston or Worcester the factory worker cannot escape dampness, filth, the feeling of being caged. Southbridge, with its abundance of fresh air and sunlight, makes him feel less an exile, more a part of the expansive outdoor world he has left behind in Albania. As one oldtimer explained, “In Southbridge you can at least breathe good air while you sleep.” In a small town it is easier to keep alive a sense of intimacy among the members of the Albanian colony. A larger city blurs communal relationships, drawing the younger members into its mechanized amusements, scattering families into different sections where they may rarely see each other except for an embarrassed “hello.” “Here we are all friendly,” says an Albanian resident of Southbridge, “or if not friends, we are enemies. But at least we are not strangers in the wilderness of America.” To immigrants from a peasant country where such monsters as business cycles had never raised their heads, Southbridge offered another immense advantage. The American Optical Company, which employs most of the Albanians there, enjoys a demand relatively unaffected by industrial fluctuations. The majority of

the Albanians in the plant, after long years of labor in less skilled jobs, now perform the difficult tasks of melting and molding glass and grinding and polishing lenses.

The behavior of Albanian factory workers shows the effect of the conflicting pressures to which they are subject. As their role in the Albanian independence movement demonstrates, they are not a docile people. Most of them consider themselves naturally militant. Their folklore is replete with legendary heroes who helped less resourceful townsmen outwit the Turkish tax gatherer; it is markedly lacking in any tendency to glorify the virtues of obedience and respect for authority. On the other hand, the Albanian immigrant to America was obsessed by the ambition to save. "To work as much as we could, to spend as little, and to send the rest back to Albania, was in the early days our Holy Trinity," says one Albanian. Blind devotion to it made him seek to please the boss. In the words of a middle-aged Albanian factory worker: "We always submitted to the will of the foreman for fear that we would be thrown out of work. This does not mean that we are spineless—no, that isn't true. But if our weekly pay envelope had stopped coming for just a short while, our people in the Old Country would have been lost. They would have thought we had forgotten them." So intense was this feeling that regular receipt of the pay envelope outweighed all broader considerations.

In many factories Albanians came to be prized by their employers as docile, uncomplaining workers. A sort of paternalistic relationship grew up between the Albanian workers and the late Windsor Reed of the Worcester Reed and Prince Screw Company, whom the Albanians still remember as "a sort of Robert Owen"—to use the phrase of one of their American-educated sons. Albanians working for him were able to return to the homeland for a protracted vacation and regain employment when they came back, almost without delay. In the average factory, however, the Albanians have at times antagonized their fellow workers by a willingness to tolerate poor working conditions.

A variety of factors operated to keep the Albanians aloof from the labor movement. Unacquainted with the English language, able to read only Albanian if they could read at all, they were isolated from workers of other racial groups. Their opinions concerning movements or ideas outside the sphere of their daily routine were derived from their nationalist leaders; and none of the leaders of the Albanian community encouraged their compatriots to interest themselves in American labor problems. The leaders wanted no distractions which would hamper the growth of the Albanian patriotic movement or divert their people's money from the nationalist coffers. Nor was there any question of the average Albanian immigrant's being swayed by the rational argumentation of labor leaders on the needs and benefits of unionism. Until about 1920 the Albanian naturally identified himself with his own closed community, because he confidently expected to return to the homeland. Even after he abandoned this hope, he was reluctant to take part in the struggles of his adopted country. Mountain and pastoral peoples are suspicious of strangers and novel ideas. His peasant shrewdness prompted the American Albanian to be wary of his fellow workers, and to suspect their motives. He wondered what they were trying to get out of him and how much. In Albania he had known nothing of social or labor legislation.

In Southbridge Albanian workers were drawn with difficulty into union drives among employees of the American Optical Company. In the Worcester Reed and Prince Screw factory, whose policy underwent considerable change after the death of Windsor Reed, they participated in the C.I.O. drive and in the recent strike. Two Albanians were chosen as members of the grievance committee. Apart from that venture they have remained indifferent to labor activities in Worcester. In Boston, Lynn, and other shoe centers, however, the Albanians, in closer contact with their fellow workers, have come into the labor movement and are now members of the C.I.O.

Although an Albanian will take almost any sort of job in a

factory rather than become a restaurant bus boy, many have had no alternative. In Boston hundreds of Albanians are employed as cooks, counter-men, and bus boys. The Greeks before them had gone into this kind of work; and when an Albanian could find nothing else, he turned to a restaurant owned by prosperous Greeks or staffed by indigent ones. Many Albanians spoke Greek; moreover, they and the Greeks had in common their membership in the Orthodox faith. But the conditions of labor in Greek restaurants are no better, and often they are worse, than in other restaurants. The workers toil from 10 to 12 hours a day for a small weekly wage and their meals. They protest against long hours, complain of the monotony of working with pots and pans. Since the depression, many younger people, unable to find other employment, have had to seek restaurant jobs. They belong to the most discouraged and disillusioned section of the Albanian population—the section that dares not think about its future. Despite their obvious dissatisfaction, however, they have failed to support unionization. About five years ago a drive was launched to unionize Greek and Albanian restaurant workers; it petered out, and the issue has not been raised since.

It has been the Albanian's ambition to escape exploitation, not by organization and protest, but by achieving a position where he could work for himself. From the first, most Albanians have hankered to establish little businesses. Even if they only peddled fruit in a pushcart, they felt they had risen in stature. They were fulfilling one of the traditional aspirations of their countrymen. They were struggling in America to accumulate enough money to return to Albania and set up little shops of their own. Why not start a business here, while they were waiting? A number of the earlier Albanian immigrants had already been storekeepers in the Old Country; some had carried on small businesses in Bucharest and other Balkan capitals. With a background of business experience, the Koki Brothers, first Albanians in Worcester, were able to open up a fruit store six weeks after their ship had docked—before they had picked up any knowledge of English. Once the

store began to flourish, they helped sponsor compatriots with similar ambitions.

Today there are probably sixty Albanian stores in Worcester, ranging from groceries and restaurants to barrooms, beer places, barber shops, shoe-shine parlors, and tailoring and cleaning establishments. In greater Boston there are over 300 grocery and fruit stores run by Albanians. Perhaps half the Albanian population in America derives its support from small concerns of this type. Most of them were started with a few hundred dollars of capital, laid aside coin by coin from the weekly pay envelope. To keep them afloat, every member of the family had to lend a hand, except the mother, who usually did not know English. Often the store was bought by two or three brothers or relatives, one of whom would remain in the factory while the others built up the business.

Many Albanian establishments have grown prosperous; an Albanian-owned tonic factory in Worcester and an ice cream company in Cambridge have attained the stature of small industries. Tiny fruit stands have occasionally developed into thriving marts located on main streets. Furniture stores, up-to-date variety shops, coal-and-wood concerns, and tire shops have been acquired by Albanians. But the great majority have not emerged from the class of petty businessmen. In Boston many of the Albanian "businessmen" are still fruit peddlers who rise at dawn to strike a good bargain at Faneuil Hall Market and spend the day crying their wares through the streets of the city and its suburbs.

Like other small tradesmen, these Albanian shopkeepers and peddlers are caught between two clearcut economic strata. At times, puffed up with pride of possession and independence, they draw a line between themselves and the factory workers. It is a thin line which does not interfere with intermarriage; but no one is allowed to forget that marriage with one of their sons or daughters is a definite "step up." When they congregate to pass the time of day, they like to identify themselves with the "big shots," and to talk about the needs and trials of American business. At

the same time, however, there is a smoldering antagonism toward the bigger capitalists. They especially resent price fixing by the monopolies. "How can we make money?" they query. "We have to sell everything—bread, milk, candy, sardines—at the price they tell us. A few years ago it was not so. We must sell all the time to earn a little." It is not only the monopolies that make the Albanian shopkeeper stay open late at night and on holidays. He has to do so in order to win a little trade away from the chain stores. With the expansive growth of the chain stores most Albanian grocers and peddlers have seen their profits fall off, and some have had to go out of business.

The petty Albanian tradesman, who is fast losing his illusion of economic security, finds little comfort in the rise of a few of his compatriots to positions of repute and solid respectability. Even in the old days, the Albanian immigrant was unable to avoid some misgivings when one of his fellows acquired the education and the dollars that would help him get on in America. There was always a chance that the fellow would become too "Americanized," that he would disappear into the "American jungle." But the immigrant needed his luckier compatriot to help him get established; and usually his trust was not misplaced. Albanians of Southbridge still remember the periodic visits of Christo Dako and his maneuvers to "make contacts" for them; just as Worcester Albanians fondly recall the similar services of the Koki Brothers. The greener immigrants knew that the English-speaking countryman who found work for them was often in collusion with the employer and got a share of the bribes they had to pay to get their jobs. But this was only a minor form of exploitation; it was nothing, compared with the systematic chicanery that some Greeks and Italians practiced upon their uninitiated countrymen.

The professional group is extremely limited in size, although it promises to be considerably expanded by recruits from the present generation of students. Four Albanian doctors, two dentists, and four lawyers are practicing in Massachusetts; and

a number of Albanians are teaching school in the state. Several have attained proficiency in the crafts, among them the nationally known silversmith, Stephen Panis.

Many of the old ties that characterized the highly cooperative life of the early Albanian community are still intact. Storekeepers and men of property continue to lend money to help their compatriots get started in business. When an Albanian finds himself without a job and without savings, he can still often turn for help to some of his countrymen. More rarely than might be expected from the poverty of his national group does his name appear on the relief rolls. But the old intimacy and unity disappeared with the *konak*. Today only an insignificant number of *konaks* are needed to house the few Albanians who have no family ties in this country.

The next institution to vanish after the importation of wives and the establishment of family life was the coffee-house. Even more than the *konak*, the coffee-house had once been the nucleus of all Albanian social life. A man's institution of long standing in the Old World, it had been transplanted by the early immigrants to the crowded slums of Massachusetts to serve as a common living-room where they could meet with people of their own kind. Within its walls America with its strange tempo and stranger ways was forgotten. Leisure hours were spent at cards; men gossiped about the latest news from their home towns, and received personal messages from the Old Country, transmitted by recent arrivals. Thumbed copies of newspapers lay about, and their reports of current Albanian affairs led to frenzied controversy. Tired workers forgot the monotonous day as they speculated about Austria's role in the Albanian question or advanced their diagnosis of the condition of Turkey. Pride crept into their voices when they pointed out how this or that big diplomat of a great European country was worrying about the Albanian problem. Questions and answers came thick and fast. Debate might last far into the night. Abruptly it might break off to permit discussion of less august affairs. Perhaps someone

would have information about jobs for newcomers or those temporarily unemployed. The coffee-house was the immigrant's employment agency as well as his forum and his club.

After 1920, one by one, the picturesque Old World haunts disappeared. Albanian women who arrived upon the scene made homes for their men, and often contrived to keep them there. Men who had taken on business and domestic responsibilities found less time to while away in "smoke-ridden Oriental institutions." Only three coffee-houses are known to have survived; one in Boston, one in Natick, and one in Worcester.

As the center of Albanian life in America shifted to the family, the Albanian women did their utmost to preserve the memory of the homeland. A visitor who enters the flat of an Albanian storekeeper today may find a number of authentic Albanian decorations scattered among the standard American pieces. Gay blankets of heavy wool are likely to be thrown over couches and chairs. Perhaps the floor will be covered with a hand-woven Albanian rug. The visitor will probably be served *llokume*—Turkish paste—and the sweet Turkish coffee which Albanians continue to consume in quantities. The Albanian housewife serves her family Albanian or Greek bread made from potatoes and whole wheat; she cooks her vegetables in oil. When she and her husband marry off a son or daughter, they can still arrange a gala festival with many of the ceremonial niceties observed on such occasions in Albania. The old folks, gathering on name-days or New Year's, solemnly repeat the customary Albanian formulas of congratulation. They drink *raki* and sing Albanian folk songs. Before the visit is over they may plunge into a round of satirical story-telling about the shortcomings of the priests of their respective towns.

All these traditions call forth memories of the old village life. But, as any sensitive Albanian will confess, they are sad and lifeless echoes. The rituals which in Albania seemed inevitable and important tend in America to become mechanical and unreal. Sometimes, in their celebrations, Massachusetts Albanians at-

tempt to combine fashionable American customs with the traditional Albanian ceremony. The usual effect is to emphasize the incongruity of the old ways. "Can one have a wedding dinner at an American hotel," one thoughtful Albanian asks, "and cling to the custom of having the bride kiss the hands of every guest? I find this mixture of the old and the new very disagreeable."

The Albanians of Massachusetts are ceasing to regard the traditional customs of their homeland as living reality. But have they found substantial values to replace what they are losing? The average Albanian, when asked his opinion of life in America, will usually acknowledge that he is better off here in one respect. He has been able to escape hunger. He is grateful for his regular pay envelope or for the \$20 or \$25 that he gains for a week's work in his store. If he has visited Albania in recent years, he has probably been shocked at the depth of the privation and misery he has escaped. "To live among those ragged, unshod people and at the same time wear a collar and necktie is an impossibility," said one Albanian, "unless you have the thick skin of an elephant."

In early *konak* days a trip to Albania was less painful. Immigrants who lived within a weekly budget of a dollar or two had not yet grown accustomed to the collar and necktie. They could not allow themselves many more comforts than Albanian villagers at home. Their ignorance of English and their alien appearance made the owners of even slum tenements afraid to rent them property; and they had to find their *konaks* in quarters all but uninhabitable. But in time as they acquired a certain familiarity with English, they moved into more desirable tenements. The "dog kennels" in Foley's Court in Worcester were given up; by 1907 Albanians had begun to move into flats in Southbridge and Beacon Streets. Some of them moved out of the slums entirely. Whenever they could, they bought their homes and settled down to improve the property. In a few cases, Albanians became owners of valuable blocks of real estate. Particularly for the more fortunate ones who acquired homes of their own, life in America appeared vastly more comfortable

than in the Old Country. Even those less favored have become accustomed to indoor toilets, running water, and sometimes baths.

Comparatively few Albanians, however, are enjoying a decent American standard of living. The great majority still live in slums. A family of five or six crowds into one of the cold-water tenements of the South End or West End of Boston, where rentals range from \$15 to \$25 a month. In Worcester many Albanians have remained in the dreary flats of Southbridge and Beacon Streets. A large proportion of the Albanian homes in Boston and Worcester slums are never touched by sunlight. Even Southbridge Albanians, who boast of their sunny apartments, often have to get along without modern improvements. In Natick, Roxbury, Somerville, Watertown, and Mattapan the Albanian residents are usually well housed; but colonies in these districts are small compared to those in slum areas.

The older Albanian immigrants who are approaching the end of their days in these miserable flats have found little reason to accept America. The price of escaping hunger has been too high. They miss the fresh air and sunlight of their native villages, though not the lice. In Albania they were accustomed to an easy-going exchange of banter and good-natured peasant witticism; here they were met with a monotonous clocklike routine that has dulled their spirits. After their years of sacrifices to bring over their families and establish little businesses, they fear that they have given up much and gained little. "America is not a fit place for bewildered old folks," they say to one another. "*Jemi te humbur*" (We are lost) is the refrain of their lament. It belies the fond illusion, to which some of the older immigrants still cling, that one day they will be able to return to Albania. Most of them, in their hearts, know that they cannot go back.

A scattered handful of Albanians have made no effort to bring their families over here and are determined to return to the homeland. One of them, when interviewed, mused: "We do not want to settle in America because we have never understood the American ways of life. We would be afraid to take a chance with our

children. If the children were to come to America, they would have to do one of two things—either they would have to adopt the American way, or they would have to stick to the customs of the Old Country. Either choice is unsatisfactory. If our children should forget the Albanian customs, we should be unhappy. If we managed to impose our will on the children, that also would be bad. Our children would resent us and there would always be friction. Besides we do not make enough money to support a family decently in America. For that one needs between \$1,500 and \$2,000 a year. We are making on the average \$20 a week. Over there we could manage on much less. In Albania a man can wear his pants patched and still hold his head up. . . . But then, it would be unfair to state the issue so simply. The Old Country cannot support us, either. We cannot go back to farming because factory life in America has changed us. Some of us have tried and been badly disappointed. . . . After much thinking we have decided to return sooner or later to Albania. . . . And yet, quite often we become doubtful of the wisdom of this course.” In his solemn deliberations, this Albanian was struggling with the common dilemma that besets most Albanian-born immigrants in America.

Few of the Albanian-born have made any real contact with native Americans or even with other groups of immigrants. Times have of course changed since the early years when, as one old immigrant reminisced, “We could not stir out of our *konaks* without being tomatoed or otherwise assaulted by rowdyish children and dago’d or god-damned by their fathers.” After the Albanian had gone to night school or picked up a smattering of English somewhere else, he was less subject to native American hostility, and less likely to take offense at random remarks. Yet to a degree that betrays how little he feels himself a part of American life, he still broods about the undignified behavior of Americans. In Albania, one knew how to deal with such insults; no one but a coward would tolerate them. Here, if a man takes offense, he is considered bellicose. That, too, is un-American. After

all, he reflects, an Albanian has very little in common with any of these other Americans, except perhaps the Greeks. And even with Greeks he cannot ever associate too freely, because Greek nationalism has always been a menace to the Albanian patriot.

Albanians still take little interest in American politics. Whatever political energy or idealism they had seems to have been spent in the fight for a free Albania. Now that they have lived to see Albania free and still hungry, they tend to revert to the old bitter fatalism about politics that characterized the enslaved Albanian peasantry before the movement for independence. Nothing in their American experience has counteracted that apathy. When they decided to become permanently established in this country, many of them sought naturalization; according to Federal statistics, the percentage of naturalized citizens among male Albanians of Massachusetts rose from 5.8 in 1920 to 27.6 in 1930. Today, probably a majority of the Albanians in the state have become citizens. But if you ask an Albanian how he feels about the next election, he is more than likely to shrug his shoulders. "What does it matter," he may say, "where I put my cross? At one time you give power to one party, and one group of rulers; then you take it away and give it to another. Bah! A stupid game. There are only two real parties, the people and the exploiters, and the people never get in." He has heard much about the corruption of American politics, and it seems to him somewhat similar to the crooked system he knew in Albania under the Turkish regime. Government in Albania meant little to him but taxes and policemen; in America he has not ceased to distrust the agents of the state.

When some aspect of American society affects their lives in a direct and practical way, Albanians may take a positive stand. Especially if they have made a trip to Albania during the present regime, they appreciate the opportunity America affords them for thinking and speaking freely. When President Wilson sponsored the cause of national minorities, he touched a responsive chord, and many of them became Wilson enthusiasts. Those who

were rescued from the depression when the repeal of prohibition enabled them to open beer places are grateful to Roosevelt. Such things the Albanians understand; they are different from mere talk about democracy in the abstract. "Why," asks an Albanian, "do the Americans get so disturbed about Fascism?" He himself, unless he gets his opinions from recent issues of *Dielli*, detests Mussolini, believing that Mussolini has made a vassal out of Albania. But he is rather favorable toward Hitler, because Hitler is a German—an Austrian—and Austria helped Albania against neighboring countries. Besides, he still recalls the Prince of Wied with some affection as the first king of his country; if he was in Albania in those days, he was probably impressed by the prince's *entourage* of martial Germans.

In order to draw some of their countrymen out of their indifference to American politics, a group of young Albanians in Worcester organized the Albanian-American Association in 1932. It is primarily a political club, and professes to be nonpartisan. In addition to staging rallies, the club has tried to instruct its members in the rudiments of history. It has also helped some of the older people to learn English, and has been instrumental in persuading many to become naturalized. A similar society, the Albanian-American Independent Political League, was founded in 1936 in Boston. The Albanian-Greek-Rumanian Organization, which was started in 1932 in Southbridge, remained a paper organization until 1936. At present it boasts about 175 members. Its main purpose is to aid naturalization, and to promote good will among the three national groups it represents.

These political clubs are evidence of a groping effort on the part of the younger generation of Albanians to make terms with their confusing environment. As yet, not many such efforts have been made. Caught between the pressure of their elders to retain Albanian customs and their own feeling that those customs have little meaning in the New World, many Albanian youths in America have become bewildered. "Colorless," "wishy-washy," "like the walking dead," is the way some of the older generation

describe them. Most young people believe that their lot as Albanians is worse than that of other second-generation youth in America. "Americans don't even know where Albania is," they say. "Besides, none of our countrymen has made a name in this country. Some have gotten a little money, yes. But there are no Albanian politicians, no mayors, no real big shots." "Water does not rise above its own level," some of them say.

Even if they were willing, they could not accept Albanian ways to the extent that their elders wish. As school children in America, they almost forgot their Albanian ancestry. Sometimes they were confused with Greeks or with Armenians; occasionally they were hounded by street urchins; but no one thought of them as Albanians, and superficially, at least, they were drawn into the melting pot. The parents, in their own perplexity, did much to encourage this attitude. As soon as the Albanian immigrant began to raise a family here, he usually succumbed to the dream of an American education for his children. After he had bought a little business and a home, he not infrequently set aside some money to send his son to college. Since the depression, the Albanian elders have tended to change their ideas about the power of higher education to give a young man a firm start. But most Albanian children in Massachusetts now graduate from high school.

A few of the younger people have reacted against the oldtimers by becoming vociferously "American." One Albanian has analyzed this group in the following terms: "By Americanism this small minority understands something by which they can bully their 'ignorant, primitive' fathers and mothers. If any of them are members of the Elks, the Freemasons, or some other society, they go out of their way to thrust this fact in the faces of the 'inferior' Albanians who are not. They live and thrive on exhibitionism. They are the fashion plates of the hour. They read and have on display everything that is considered 'American.' They are ready to give you the 'inside dope' on anything and everything, and no one and everyone."

Members of the older generation regard this group with varying degrees of disapproval. Those who have smarted most keenly from the unfriendliness of native Americans avenge themselves by violent outbursts against these "Americans" among their own children. "Ah, yes," they say mockingly, "America is the best, the biggest, the richest country on earth. We should be glad to live in a country where everyone can become a millionaire. Why, just look at the number of millionaires in America. America has the highest standard of living, the greatest number of schools . . . Bah, these Americans." Even those who object less to American ways deplore the evident eagerness of the hyper-Americanized youth to conceal their ancestry. The following story is a good illustration of a constantly recurring conflict. One day an elderly Albanian went to visit a nephew at his store. In his usual quiet and serious voice he greeted his nephew in Albanian. The nephew responded in loud English. After several minutes of this interplay, the uncle said: "Are you ashamed to talk with me Albanian? You don't have to speak loud. Speak low and no one will hear you." The uncle, in recounting this incident to a friend, commented sadly, "This is not a healthy sign. It produces characterlessness." After a while, he added, "Even among older people, there are a few 'apologetic' ones. You know the kind I mean. The ones who say, 'Don't talk about the Albanians—who are they? They should learn, not criticize. There may be difficulties in American life, but in heaven's name don't speak of them. It's for the native stock to solve them by themselves. So be silent: don't mention our immigrant problems, or you will only put us to shame.'" According to Albanian intellectuals, the blatantly "American" group is very small, even among the youth. Few of the younger people are aggressive in any way. They play a docile, passive role; and their conflicts with the elders are thrust upon them, rather than deliberately sought.

As a rule, they respect the intense feeling of their parents against intermarriage with other nationalities. The bias of the

elders on this question has a complex basis. While some speak of intermarriage in terms of dishonor to the family, most of them advance more practical reasons. So different are the Albanian ideas and customs from those of other races, they think, that marriage out of their own nationality cannot possibly be a success. The parents are afraid of losing contact with a son or daughter married to anyone but an Albanian. When their child brings home a partner of alien blood, they feel embarrassed. They are at a loss for ways to entertain him; the household becomes upset. They know of Albanian young people who have married old stock Americans or French Canadians; and almost always the marriages have failed. If their boys "go out" with girls of other nationalities, they do not raise serious objections as long as they marry Albanian girls in the end. But Albanian girls are not usually allowed such diversions. The elders are more fearful of intermarriage involving an Albanian girl than an Albanian boy. Besides, Albanian girls are not supposed to "go out," even with boys of their own race, unless they are chaperoned.

Arranged marriages still prevail, though the procedure is somewhat less formal than in the Old Country. The boy goes to a third person and remarks, "I think I like so-and-so's daughter." Or a father visits some trusted intermediary and says, "I have two or three daughters. Do you know of any suitable young man who would be interested?" The third person proceeds to visit the parents of the girl or boy selected, usually taking along photographs. The parents launch a volley of questions. If their daughter's hand is desired, they usually ask, "This boy you speak of, is he a loafer or a good worker? Has he a business? What's his home town? Is he in a position to marry?" If the intermediary is suggesting a wife for their son, the typical question is, "Now, this girl—is she a good housekeeper? Has she a good character?" If they decide favorably, they summon their son or daughter, show the photograph, and ask his or her consent. Then the intermediary relays the answer to the first party. After that the boy meets the girl. Under some pretext, he calls upon her, usually on a saint's day.

While she offers him coffee and preserves, he looks her over and makes up his mind whether or not he likes her.

The elaborate wedding celebration is also arranged by the parents. Usually each family holds a separate festival, bearing its own expenses and inviting its own guests. The parties almost always start on Saturday night. Long tables are laden with food and drink. The guests sit about singing Albanian folk songs. There is dancing. The parties adjourn at five or six o'clock in the morning and the guests retire to their homes until two o'clock in the afternoon, when the church ceremony is held. The ritual, intricate and long-drawn-out, is that of the Greek Orthodox Church. A crown is placed on the boy's head, transferred to the girl's head, then back to the boy's. When it is over, the bride and groom drive around town in an automobile, probably stopping to have their picture taken. Later in the evening the guests reappear at the groom's house, or perhaps in a hall rented for the occasion. Sometimes a few intimate friends are entertained at the bride's house; sometimes the families combine their festivities. The bride, returning from her drive, has her hands rubbed with honey before she enters her new house. Then the celebration is resumed and continues until early morning. When the time comes for reckoning the cost of the lavish show, the boy's family usually finds that it has spent more than the girl's. This is considered appropriate, since Albanians always feel that the son is more closely tied to the family than the daughter. When the girl marries, they regard her as a member of her husband's family. The boy is never thought of as lost to his parents. He is expected to support them in old age.

In turning their girl over to her husband, parents of the Greek Orthodox faith often follow the Old World custom of giving her a dowry. Between 1920 and 1930, when Albanian immigrants were importing wives from the homeland, the man usually gave a dowry for the girl. The unusual procedure was considered necessary in order to compensate the parents for paying the girl's fare to America. Now that wives are no longer imported, the

Albanians have reverted to the more normal usage. Especially where the husband has had a higher education, a dowry is expected, for he is likley to become a superior breadwinner. Nowadays, in order to avoid embarrassment, the girl's father resorts to some subterfuge that conceals the reason for the gift. "We are willing to set them up in housekeeping," he says to the boy's father. Or perhaps, "Our girl has worked in the store, and I paid her five dollars a week. Of course, I put the money away for her. You can have it."

Albanian girls in this country are still customarily married off at an early age, usually between eighteen and twenty-one. The parents do not insist upon a particular husband with the same urgency as they did in Albania. In the Old Country, custom was hard on the maid who proved obstinately opposed to her parents' notion of her proper destiny. If the stubborn girl had the bad luck to live in northern Albania, she had to vow perpetual chastity; and if she broke that vow, she started at least two blood feuds, for which she was held solely responsible. "She knew how much blood would have to be shed," the unsympathetic villagers would remark. The girl of southern Albania, the region from which most Massachusetts Albanians come, was somewhat more fortunate: she would merely be forbidden to marry any other young man in the town. In Massachusetts no girl is penalized for refusing to accept her parents' choice. "We do not pester our girls to marry anybody they don't like," volunteered one Albanian father.

The customary Albanian conception of woman's role still survives in Massachusetts and often casts a shadow over whatever ambitions the more spirited girls may entertain of living on a plane of equality with their brothers. In their homes they rarely find much encouragement for preparing themselves for a career. While Albanian girls in Massachusetts are usually sent through high school, their parents seldom set aside money to give them a higher education. From her early childhood, the girl receives instruction in homemaking and in the intricate art of needlework.

By the time she has reached the age of fifteen, she is expected to be as competent a housekeeper as her mother. During the interval between graduation from high school and marriage, she often helps her father in his store or shop. This has meant a lot to the hard-pressed little businessman, especially since the crisis of 1929. Before the depression, a large proportion of the Albanian shops were prosperous enough to support two families, and the shopkeepers were able to solve the problem of long hours by working on a partnership basis. Now that he can barely scrape together a living for his own little family, the shopkeeper has often had to dispense with a partner. Without the help of their daughters, many of them would have to close down entirely.

Albanian girls may be excellent housekeepers, but they rarely go into domestic service. This is in accordance with Albanian tradition, which considers it disgraceful for women to work for anyone but their own families. In other work, especially among the more Americanized Albanians, this tradition shows increasing signs of breaking down. About twenty Albanian girls between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one are now working at the American Optical Company in Southbridge. Their fathers and brothers seem to have become reconciled; with the addition to the family budget, they can buy a car or radio. In Boston and Worcester many Albanian girls are now filling office and secretarial positions. The nursing profession has attracted a considerable number. One Albanian woman has made a successful career for herself as a doctor, and now practices in Boston with her husband. Another is a trained librarian in the Worcester Public Library.

The few instances where women have received advanced schooling indicate that higher education does not necessarily inspire them to rebel against the Albanian community. There is the case of two sisters, both college graduates, now working in a brokerage house in Worcester. They were visiting the family of the young man to whom the elder sister was engaged. In between questions and answers, the bride-to-be was energetically

working in the kitchen of her prospective mother-in-law, while the emaciated old lady, just arrived from the homeland, nodded approval. At intervals the girl looked up from her work to notice the effect; it was important that she impress the old lady with her suitability as an Albanian wife. The other sister was sitting at her ease, watching the performance. When asked why she was not helping, she replied petulantly, "Why should I? I am not the *nuse* (the bride)." Unconsciously she lapsed into the Albanian term to explain the situation.

It is still considered novel for Albanian women to express opinions, even orthodox ones, on political and social questions. The average Albanian woman in Massachusetts is still unobtrusive. She does not vote. In these modern days she eats at the same table with the men, unless there are too many guests to be accommodated, but she does not compete with her husband in the conversation. In church men and women are always seated separately, the men usually on the right and the women on the left or in the balcony. At weddings the women keep to themselves. An Albanian youth brought up in this atmosphere finds it hard to adjust himself to marriage with an Albanian girl who has been imbued with modern ideas. As one lad, caught in a situation which is becoming increasingly common, complained, "When I come home from work, my wife expects me to hold the baby or to wash the dishes. Isn't that strange? But she says that it is only just. So we quarrel a good deal. That bothers me, too. My father and mother never quarrel."

Situations of this kind are a source of great anxiety to the older generation because their code has no remedy for them. Divorce, especially when children are involved, is usually not recognized by Albanians as a solution, even in cases of infidelity. In this respect, the elder Albanians have remained sternly hostile to American ways. They are virtually unanimous in decrying what they regard as the "looseness of American morals." Their determination to protect their youth from "degradation" leads to an eagle-eyed vigilance of which the Albanian child becomes con-

scious almost as soon as he leaves the cradle. The free intermingling of girls and boys in games and sports seems startling to Old World parents.

The older people realize, of course, that they can no longer depend on the south European custom of segregating boys and girls in order to avoid "sexual chaos." They react against their fears and bewilderment by making diatribes against the corruption of American life a staple of their conversation. Nor have they ever had much predilection for the common south European custom of boasting of conquests over women. When they want to boast, they prefer to speak about some ancestor who executed a particularly daring murder, or about some vendetta in which they took part in the Old Country.

The Albanian tradition of lawlessness, in which even "law-abiding" members of the population used to participate to the extent of honoring blood feuds, has had no echo on this side of the water. The sober, conscientious Albanian immigrants of the early decades of the century rarely, if ever, became involved with the criminal courts. As parents, they have trained their children to stay away from the "gangs." The few murders which have been committed by Albanians have usually been to avenge adultery. Many older people still consider this the natural method of punishing unfaithful wives—the only way they can preserve themselves against the "sexual chaos" of American life.

At the same time that they continue to affirm the commandments of their native code, the Albanians cannot help knowing that their national traditions are slipping away from them. At present they are almost bereft of trusted leaders. Since the virtual demise of Vatra, no strong intercity organization except the church exists to hold them together. The old folks still talk about resurrecting Vatra, to the accompaniment of scoffs from the younger generation.

In each of the larger Albanian settlements there are a few clubs or associations which bring the older people memories of the homeland. Albanian ladies' societies sometimes stage Old

Country romantic plays. In Southbridge about thirty-five women are members of a ladies' society that gives plays and carries on charitable work among the poorer Albanians of the community. The various "town societies"—organizations of natives of a particular Albanian town for the purpose of building schools and extending other assistance to it—are still active. So deeply embedded is the sense of village loyalty that the older folks still prefer to hobnob with people who have hailed from the same spot in Albania. With fellow townsmen they do not feel so lost in the "American jungle." They have common memories; everyone can appreciate the heroism of his own townsmen and the barbs at the shortcomings of inhabitants of other villages.

Organized life, aside from the church, is now confined largely to social and philanthropic activities. An exception is the economic cooperative established in Bridgeport, Connecticut, by the twenty-two Albanian grocers in that city. Occasionally a voice is raised in Massachusetts deploring the failure of local Albanians to take steps toward economic cooperation. But so far nothing has been done. Some undoubtedly recall the dismal failure of the first Albanian experiment with cooperatives in 1917. At that time a group of Worcester immigrants founded the General Trading Company for the purpose of supplying the fifty-one Albanian stores with ice cream and candy. Within three years the company had folded up, allegedly because of mismanagement in distribution and in the handling of funds.

The Albanian language is gradually dying out among the younger generation in Massachusetts. Anyone who addresses a boy of school age in Albanian is quite likely to be answered with a look of uncomprehending stupefaction. Parents, fearing that the next generation will forget the language, do everything they can to keep it alive in the home. In Southbridge the Reverend Llambi of the Albanian Orthodox Church teaches the rudiments of the tongue in a class that meets four times a week, but of the several hundred Albanian school children in Southbridge only about thirty-five or forty attend. In the fall of 1938 the Albanian

government sent a special teacher to Worcester to teach Albanian to the youngsters. Within the last few months Nuchi Cojo, a resident of Natick, has inaugurated a radio program in Albanian. Broadcast every Sunday morning at nine o'clock over WORL in Boston, the program consists largely of Albanian ballads and folk songs, many of them from phonograph recordings imported from Albania.

Prior to the Italian occupation of the homeland in April 1939, Albanian Americans had become increasingly indifferent to Old World politics. Resentment toward their former leaders in Massachusetts and antagonism to the Zog regime had continued to smolder. At the November 28th celebrations of the proclamation of Albanian independence, the orators would talk more about the past than the present; they would recall their sufferings under Turkish rule, express their gratitude that their people were now under their own flag. When the three princesses visited Massachusetts in 1938, it might have appeared to a casual observer that the Albanian community was deeply attached to King Zog. Hundreds of dollars worth of flowers were sent them. Thousands jammed the churches where they were received. In Southbridge the Albanian Church was so overcrowded that the floor collapsed. But many Albanians are reluctant to draw a political moral from the enthusiastic welcome. Whatever the princesses' trip might or might not mean from a political point of view, the spread it received in the American press gave local Albanians a momentary sense of importance. At last, it seemed, the American press was paying them some attention. A royal visit from the Old Country had catapulted the entire Albanian community into the limelight, and it turned out *en masse* to enjoy its novel role.

Probably ninety percent of the Albanians in this country now regard America as their permanent home. Time is slowly wearing down their instinctive antagonism to many American customs. The change can be noted in their attitude toward sports. In earlier days they were accustomed to reprove their children for taking part in games. "The Americans have no time to

think," they would complain. "Games and sports have made them brainless. They are not men—they are children." But by the time the Albanian government in its superficial efforts at Americanization had begun to foster sports in the homeland, the American Albanians had changed sufficiently to take the lead in carrying out the plan. As with sports, so with other aspects of American life. An Albanian observer, writing of the average middle-aged member of his community at the present time, says: "He wishes to keep some of his Albanian customs, while discarding others. He has adopted an attitude of skepticism, which many people mistake for distrust. At the present moment he is at a standstill, but he has not given up the fight. It is merely that his present life offers him no scope for activity. Before the war all his energies flowed into the struggle for the homeland. After the war he lost that outlet. Then he set himself to build up a small business and to send his son through school. When the depression came, he lost that outlet too. But given something to fight for, he will toil with all his old earnestness and strength of character. He needs help; even more than he, his children need help. For they do not as yet have a sense of belonging in America. When they get that feeling, they will overcome their indifferent attitude toward their adopted home. They will come to realize that a new culture is in the making in America, and that they may join the other races of the world in helping to build it."

CHAPTER V

A CHRONICLE OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE

1. Albanian Orthodox Church Foundation and Organization

THE STRONGEST Albanian organization in Massachusetts at the present time is the Albanian Orthodox Church of America, founded in 1908. Its purposes were minutely explained in the preamble to the "Albanian Rules and Regulations of the Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church, St. George" (Boston, 1908). Although described in this preamble as "purely religious," the church immediately became a center for nationalist agitation—and so remained until the achievement of Albanian independence in 1920. Thereafter, political activities became of secondary importance in church affairs.

Ninety-five percent of the present Albanian population in Massachusetts belongs to the Orthodox faith, and the churches are all Orthodox. There are still a few stray Moslem groups, notably in New Bedford and Peabody, but they have no religious institutions. After the World War most of the Moslems returned to the Old Country, but even when their numbers had been greatest they had no places of worship. Whereas the Orthodox Christians with their elaborate religious rituals require churches and officially ordained priests, Moslems do not need edifices for worship, because their religious ceremonies are simple. Their children are not baptized; funeral services can be performed by any layman who reads the Koran; and civil marriages are recognized as binding.

There are six Albanian Orthodox Churches in Massachusetts, three in Boston and one each in Natick, Worcester, and Southbridge. The Church of St. Nicholas in Southbridge, dedicated

on May 16, 1912, was the first building in America constructed as an Albanian church. There were earlier Albanian churches, but these had been purchased from other denominations or were merely rented halls in which services were held. St. Nicholas, which is now attended also by Charlton City and Webster Albanians, has a congregation far exceeding the capacity of the structure. St. Mary's Church is the center of worship for Albanians in Worcester as well as for their coreligionists in Hudson and Marlborough. St. George's Church in Boston, the mother church, draws worshipers from Brockton and Lynn.

The churches are all governed alike, with the exception of Holy Trinity in South Boston and St. John's in Boston, which do not recognize Bishop Noli as the head of the Albanian Orthodox Church of North America. St. Trinity was established in 1920 when the Reverend Christopher, who had played an influential role in early Albanian migration to Massachusetts, charged that Bishop Noli had not been properly ordained. St. John's was founded in 1934, because a group of Bishop Noli's followers resented his loss of interest in the fight against the Zog regime. It still maintains its separatist policy, hurling accusations of venality against the head of the other Albanian churches.

The religious function of the Orthodox Church, almost lost sight of during the struggle for Albanian national independence, has since become paramount. In an age when there is a tendency among young people to remain away from church services, Albanian religious leaders, like pastors of other sects, have had to cast about for special attractions. Bishop Noli has introduced a number of features, common among other religious groups but entirely new to Albanians. The development of choral singing was a startling but popular innovation. Throughout the state priests have sought to appeal to the younger generation by bringing social activities into the church. Through numerous clubs founded under their auspices (see section II, *Clubs and Associations*) the churches have become the principal centers of group activity among Albanians.



THE CHURCH OF SAINT NICHOLAS
Southbridge, 1912

HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Practically every day in the year is designated for some special observance among Albanians, the most sacred days being marked in the church calendar by a cross. Many days are set aside to honor the memory of saints. As is true of all Orthodox people, each Albanian family celebrates the memorial days of saints after whom its members have been named. New Year's Day, for instance, has a two-fold significance for any family with a "Vasil" among its members, since it is the day which the church calendar assigns to the memory of Saint Vasil. When observing a saint's memorial day a family opens its house to guests and serves them sweets, *raçi* (gin), and Turkish coffee. Each guest on entering the house goes through the following ritual:

Guest to celebrant: "May your name's day be a joy to you."

Celebrant: "Thank you, may your days also be filled with blessings and joy."

Guest to the house-wife: "Long live your son (husband, daughter, etc.). May he have many, many such name days."

House-wife: "Thank you. May your days and those of your family be long, joyful, and happy."

Easter is the happiest and most important religious holiday. Festivities begin on Saturday evening. At midnight the eager populace packs the churches to hear the words, "Christ hath Arisen!" Then comes the custom of exchanging and breaking red-colored eggs. So profound a sense of happiness pervades the Albanians on Easter Day that no observer can fail to catch the feeling of joyousness and good will. It seems to oustrip by far the American Christmas in exuberance. Church attendance continues well into the night; friends kiss one another, cares and troubles are shaken off.

Saint George's Day, which falls on April 23, is observed almost universally. Of pagan origin, it has been celebrated for ages by Albanians, Moslem and Christian alike. In the homeland throngs of people sleep out in the fields and forests and greet the dawn

with songs and folk dances. Young girls wash their faces with dew at sunrise, in the belief that they thereby become more beautiful. Unmarried women make wreaths of wild flowers, draping doorways and roofs; according to tradition, those whose wreaths are stolen will become brides within the next year. In Massachusetts the Old Country festivities of Saint George's Day have been abandoned but the holiday still has a threefold significance: it is a religious holiday, a special day in the calendar of Saint George's Church in Boston, and the name day of the Albanian national hero, Scanderbeg, whose Christian name was George Castriota.

October 26, Saint Demeter's Day, roughly corresponds to our Thanksgiving Day. In the mother country it marks the beginning of the winter season. It is faithfully celebrated in both Albania and America, especially by those who have been named in honor of this saint.

New Year's Day merrymaking begins on New Year's Eve and continues throughout the night and the whole of the next day. Church services are held everywhere at about mid-day. The following Old World custom is still observed by Albanians in Massachusetts. Some "lucky" person, preferably a young boy, but not infrequently some older man who is regarded by his neighbors as favored by fortune, is invited by each family to be the first to enter its home after sunrise. This, it is believed, insures happiness and prosperity for the whole family during the year to come. If a young boy is chosen, he is given candy, nuts, and other gifts, and then sent home; if it is a man, he is asked to remain to dinner. Another tradition connected with New Year's Day is the hiding of a silver coin in a specially prepared *byrek* (pie). The pie, with the coin baked into it, is divided among all those present, and the one who finds the coin in his piece is hailed as a "lucky" person. Apparently of pagan origin, this custom is followed by both Christian and Moslem Albanians.

Ujet' e Bekuar (Blessed Water), falling on January 6, is a holiday second in importance only to Easter and New Year's

Day and is observed by all Christian Albanians, who associate it with Saint John the Baptist. As the traditional day of purification for sinners it is the occasion of impressive religious ceremonies. In the homeland all the townspeople gather on the bank of a nearby river or pond, where a clergyman officiates from a specially erected platform. As he reads the ceremony, the priest pauses at a certain passage to throw a cross into the water. Divers standing near the water's edge plunge in to retrieve it and the successful diver is given a prize. The cross is then carried from house to house to be kissed by the faithful. In this country the outdoor ceremony has been discarded; the cross is merely immersed in a vessel of cold water two days before the holiday, to be removed when the day arrives. The freezing of the water is hailed as a good omen. Sanctified by the cross, the water is sprinkled upon the devout. Both in Albania and in Massachusetts the religious services are followed by the "auctioning off" of the saints. The icons, or holy images, are offered at auction by the priest or some other church member; and in theory they become the property of the highest bidders, although actually they are never removed.

In addition to feasts there are fasts, which are observed in America with some degree of regularity. Among the orthodox, each season brings its period of abstinence, but not all of these periods are observed with the same strictness. Most commonly observed are the periods prior to Easter, to Assumption Day in August, and to Christmas. Among Massachusetts Albanians on the evening before the first day of Lent Albanian families partake of sumptuous meals of chicken, beef, lamb, vegetables, and fruits. From this time until Easter the faithful are forbidden to eat meat, eggs, butter, or cheese. Sometimes even fish and oil are tabooed. The strict observance of Lent is limited ordinarily to the first and last weeks of the period. On "Black Friday," corresponding to our Good Friday, all Albanians go to church and sing solemn hymns about the Sacrifice. The August fast lasts from the first of the month to the fifteenth, ending with the cele-

bration of the Assumption of the Virgin, called by Albanians the "Falling Asleep of the Holy Birth-Giver of God." Worcester Albanians make much of this day, since the Albanian name of their church means "Falling Asleep of the Holy Birth-Giver of God."

2. Marriage

The marriage customs of Massachusetts Albanians, as described in Chapter IV, are far less elaborate than those of the Old Country. Not only have ritual and celebration been abridged by the elimination of many features considered essential in the Old Country; but the whole procedure of match-making and betrothal has been liberalized. If love matches are rare among the Albanians of Massachusetts, they are still more rare in the homeland.

In Massachusetts, while Albanian girls are usually married off between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, the modern American Albanian male is eager to get a good start in life before increasing his responsibilities and he commonly waits until twenty-five or thirty. In Albania, where a boy follows in his father's footsteps and has little to gain by waiting, both sexes marry young. Any boy's family welcomes a healthy, hard-working girl; the bride's family is consoled for the loss of her services by the knowledge that she is being provided for and has done the accepted thing. Engagements are sometimes made before the couple are born, or even before they are conceived. One man may say to another: "When you have a daughter, I want her to marry my son," and the bargain may be sealed then and there.

The unwritten laws governing marriage differ somewhat between the northern and southern sections of Albania. Among the Orthodox Christians of the south a dowry from the bride's parents is customary; while in the north the young man is the one who "buys" his partner. Rigid contracts are drawn up to bind dowry promises, the church authorities acting in the capacity of civil officers.

The Albanian match-maker, usually a woman, is a trusted friend or relative of one of the families concerned; and her function is to unite two young people who are not supposed to meet until they are married. One of her duties is to see that absolute secrecy is maintained during the initial stages of the vicarious courtship: if the engagement fails to materialize, and she has done her work well, nothing but a whisper is heard. Her usual procedure is to invite the young man to the house of some friend in the neighborhood where the girl lives. At the opportune moment, doubtless prearranged by the match-maker, the girl appears on the street and is pointed out to her potential husband. If he likes her, the transaction is complete, except for formalities conducted through the match-maker on the following day. The girl, too, is consulted. But since her parents have kept her secluded from childhood, she does not know the young man, and obviously her wishes can never be of great importance. For a prospective bride who is not too comely, a more presentable maid has been known to be substituted in the first showing. A bridegroom who has been defrauded probably protests when his life partner has been brought home to him. In that case he will be told that his eyes must have played tricks upon him in his excitement at the first glimpse of his future wife.

When the groundwork for the betrothal is completed, there follows a formal announcement of the engagement and an exchange of gifts. Usually a group of from three to five persons, one of whom must be a woman, proceeds to the girl's house carrying a ring, fruits, and several kinds of sweets, including the famous Turkish *llokume*. The bride's family serves *llokume*, *rafi*, and Turkish coffee to all the guests. Ordinarily this visit is brief, and the engagement party leaves as soon as the betrothal mementos and congratulatory remarks have been exchanged.

The *jav' e nuses* (bridehood week) is a period of great activity. Gifts pour into the bride's house. Parties are held for relatives and neighbors. Monday begins with the preparation of the wheat to be used for the wedding bread; in a day or two the wheat is

carried to the neighborhood mill to be ground into flour. Sometimes in the early part of the week the groom sends the bride *mazia* (gallnut), a concoction for dyeing hair and finger nails. On Thursday neighbors and relatives take their mules and donkeys and horses into the forest to gather wood for the two families. In two or three hours the caravan returns, singing and drinking, to the village. In some localities sticks of wood are placed in the form of a cross on the roof of the groom's house.

On Sunday morning a "water party" starts for some nearby spring to fetch fresh water with which the groom is to be washed and shaved. The shaving, done by a relative, is the occasion of much rejoicing and merriment. Women and children playfully assemble around the groom, who is protected by the best man, called *vellam* (brother), and banter him with the ditty:

The barber has come from Istanbul
Good luck has brought him here.
But what kind of fellow is this man
Who has come without a razor of silver?
What shall we make the barber for dinner?
We will serve him his trusted razor!
Or perchance a patty of forty leaves.

After the shaving ceremony, the groom disappears. When he returns he has donned his wedding costume. This time he moves about among his guests, kissing the hands of his elders and embracing others. As an accompaniment to this ceremony the women and children sing:

Oh Head of the House,
Take off the raiments of youth,
Throw them down from the roof,
Put on the garments of matrimony. . . .

Shortly afterward the party leaves the house and proceeds, singing all the way, to the home of the bride. Before entering they wash their hands in water basins and towels provided for

them in the hallway. As soon as they are seated, they are served *llokume* and *raçi*. No one sees the bride except the best man, who excuses himself from his seat at the right of the groom to withdraw and put a sash or girdle around her waist and also to bestow a small gift on the bridesmaid. Upon his return to the company he may exclaim: "Eat, drink, and be merry, my friends; for our bride is as beautiful as a mountain partridge!" Soon after this the guests depart. The groom is the last to leave the house. As he goes, a woman presents him with a bouquet of flowers. Emerging into the courtyard, the guests chant:

What we did to our host
Is wonderful and fine—
We took away his daughter,
Yes, his wonderful Caroline. . . .

In the afternoon a solemn and elaborate marriage ceremony is held in the church. From there the congregation proceeds to the groom's house for an all-night celebration. This time the bride is very much in evidence as she moves about kissing the hands of elderly relatives and of many of the guests, from whom she is receiving money and other gifts.

These marriage customs are observed with a precise fidelity among all Orthodox Christians in Albania. The Moslems follow the same pattern, with a few minor variations.

Birth

In America the ritual observed at childbirth is very simple. Immediately after an Albanian child is born, relatives and close friends are notified, the bearer of the news always being rewarded with a *siharik* (tip). Within the next three days the parents send *petulla* (cakes) to friends and relatives. On the third day a celebration is held at the parents' home, at which time the guests in their turn bring *petulla* and other gifts. If the mother should be confined in a hospital, as is usually the case in this country, the celebration is delayed until baptism. In any case baptism is an

important function, friends and relatives being invited to the church and to the parents' home after the ceremony.

Many Old World superstitions about childbirth have died out among the Albanians in Massachusetts. But occasionally an elderly immigrant will still be found who believes in the power of the "evil eye." In the homeland, when infants die from causes that seem mysterious, the elders have always been inclined to attribute the catastrophe to the "evil eye." Tradition points out the facial characteristics of persons endowed by demons with this malignant power, and precautions are taken to protect the child from these evil-doers. Reckless indeed is the Albanian mother who does not place a *kuleta* (amulet) on her new-born child. The nature of the *kuleta* varies in different localities. Among Christians it generally takes the form of a miniature cross, whereas Moslems use silver trinkets of a triangular shape, called *hajmali*. Garlic is almost universally employed as a charm. The superstition of the "evil eye" is a source of considerable profit to the clergy, who sell the *nuskas* which are enclosed within the amulets. *Nuskas* are verses written on paper which is later cut into strips or triangles. When someone has been already afflicted with the "evil eye," the *nuska* may be soaked in water, and the water drunk by the sufferer. According to another superstition, any person who caresses or fondles an Albanian child must, whenever he utters a compliment, add the Arabic benediction "*Mashalla*" (As God wishes). Should this precaution be neglected, any misfortune that may subsequently befall the child is laid to the negligent person's "evil eye."

Death

As soon as an Albanian dies, his relatives and friends gather around the deathbed and sing his praises. This ceremony is intended to influence the spirits in favor of the dead man and, above all, to spare him the suffering and humiliation of becoming a *lugat* (as the Albanians call a condemned soul). Clergymen,

elderly men, and beggars are invited to join in the prayers, for a curse from any of these is believed to have very serious consequences. In order that everyone may have a chance to say good words about the deceased, a funeral feast is arranged. It is not uncommon to have a priest or some other "divine" agent continue to pray for the deceased for several weeks after burial. Lamentations must be sung by the women for a long time. Sometimes professional lamenters are hired for the purpose. For weeks, and sometimes months, after the death of an Albanian it is not unusual to hear the dead man's mother, wife, or sister chanting mournfully in her home or over his grave.

Two of the best known Albanian burial songs run as follows:

Song for the Death of An Infant

Thou sleepest the eternal sleep, thine eyes are closed, so that
thou mayest think the better about thy mother and parents.

Thy sweet smile, which has not left thee, leaves me with hope.

Thou art alive, and thou art only playing a game with us,
isn't it so, my lovely child?

Yes, Yes! For thou leavest with me an unparalleled cruelty
(wretchedness) because thou art in the flower of thine age,
that age which is the most beautiful!

When thy father, brothers, sisters saw thy loveliness increasing each day, they were happy in admiring thee; so dear
and so lovely; didst thou wish to leave them?

Hear me, my child, have pity on my sorrow. My voice, which
reaches as far as the heavens, should reach thy heart and
make it feel!

See how thy mother debates with herself, see how she despairs,
see her tears falling like a torrent. What, hast thou no longer
any pity for her!

O death, cruel death, without pity and without sense, thou hast
hardened the most tender of hearts and hast made it resist
the prayers of a desolate mother.

Song for a Child

Pitiless death, why didst thou snatch my child, why didst thou
tear him from my caress? O my dearly beloved child!

Thou wert too cruel in fulfilling thy function; since thou had
to take him with thee, why didst thou have him pass through
such prolonged and cruel sufferings? O my dearly beloved
child!

If it is true that thou, O death, art terrible in any form, thou wert
most barbarous to a wretched mother in taking away her only
joy. O my dearly beloved child!

But then, my soul! my lost hope! why didst thou not resist his
blows? O my dearly beloved child!

Didst thou not consider that by thine eternal departure, thou hast
opened a wound in my heart that can never heal? O my
dearly beloved child!

Didst thou not consider the pains of thine unhappy mother, didst
thou not think of the cares we took to protect thee? O my
dearly beloved child!

What use, my dear treasure, that thou smilest among the angels,
when thou hast left me on earth, condemned to eternal tears?
O my dearly beloved child!

True, the angels in heaven dance with joy and sing hymns of
peace at the arrival of a new companion. O my dearly be-
loved child!

Meanwhile I, sad and inconsolable on this earth of sorrows, fix
mine eyes toward heaven, toward thee. O my dearly beloved
child!

May thine innocent and pure soul become a star of hope and life
for me. O my dearly beloved child!

May my soul, when I, too, give my body to the earth, may my
soul meet thine so that we may never more leave each other.
O, my dearly beloved child!

3. *Clubs and Associations*

The development of Albanian societies and clubs, including the coffee-houses, has followed the pattern usual among immigrant groups. As adaptation to the new environment becomes more marked, and as the older generation disappears, such organizations decrease in number. They are typical expressions of isolated groups striving to preserve some sense of communal existence. To a large extent these organizations intensified the tendency of the early Albanians to withdraw from American life. Yet, from another point of view, they served as a medium for the exchange of experiences and so accelerated the process of assimilation. Members who had come in contact with influences outside of their immediate ethnic sphere communicated their knowledge to other members, who in turn imitated, or tried to imitate, the new, whether it was good or bad.

Throughout the state there are small societies composed of men hailing from the same town or village in Albania. These societies, of which there are thirteen in Greater Boston alone, grew up for the most part between 1905 and 1920. Many of these groups have been instrumental in repairing churches and streets in the Old Country. After 1920 a few of them extended the scope of their activities to include death benefits for their members. Each year nearly all the societies provide the indispensable marriage dowry for one or more orphaned or destitute girls in Albania. The oldest of these Albanian organizations in the United States, Dardha Mbleta (Dardha is the name of the town, *mbleta* means bee), now has about 100 members, all male. In 1925 Dardha Mbleta spent over \$10,000 for the erection of schools in the hometown. Three societies bearing the names of the towns of Katundi, Korcha, and Stratoberdha were organized in 1908. During the twenties when quarrels arose in Albania over ownership of communal lands, the Society of Stratoberdha paid for the establishment of the title of the hometown to its lands. The Educational Society of Korcha sponsored publication of a number of

books, notably Bishop Noli's *History of Scanderbeg*, and has granted several scholarships to young people from Korcha attending colleges in America. Of more recent origin are the societies of Trebitska Zbukurimi (Beautifying Trebitska), founded in 1919, Treska Bashkimi (Treska Union) (1920), Panariti Shqiponja (Panariti Eagle) (1927), and Voskopoja Sina (Sina is the name of an illustrious son of Voskopoja) (1932). These latter associations are conceived on lines similar to the earlier town societies, and all have their headquarters in Boston. Worcester has three analogous groups, the societies of Boboshtitsa, Drenova and Polena. The Society of Permeti, founded at Lynn in 1917, was particularly active during the Peace Conference.

Among the clubs and societies that have developed under the auspices of the Albanian Orthodox Church are Dora d'Istra, a dramatic society connected with St. Mary's Church in Worcester; annually it presents a series of plays, concerts, and operettas in Albanian. Women of the church have organized the Daughters of St. Mary, which takes care of religious articles used in church rituals. Another Worcester society, Shpresa (Hope) is composed of older women of the church who are attempting to preserve customs and manners of the homeland. Vetetima (Lightning), a women's society in Natick, concentrates upon charitable work. In Boston there are two women's groups, the Albanian Ladies' Union, organized in 1923, and the Daughters of St. George, organized in 1937. The former at one time sponsored an Albanian orphanage; a few years ago, when Korcha was nearly destroyed by an earthquake, the Albanian Ladies' Union sent the distressed city several hundred dollars. The Daughters of St. George confine their activities to St. George's Church in Boston. Mbleta (Bee), the Albanian Ladies' society of Southbridge, with about thirty-five members, presents an occasional play, extends financial assistance to the church, and gives medical aid to the unfortunates of the Albanian community.

At least two associations have been formed by Albanian students in American colleges. In 1918, at the International College

in Springfield, an Albanian society was established for the cultural and educational development of its student members and other young people interested in its program. In 1920 the Albanian Students' Society of America, bearing the name of the old Bucharest nationalist group, Drita (Light), was founded with headquarters at Harvard University. It is composed of college and high school students and alumni of Albanian descent, who strive to keep alive an interest in Albanian history and traditions. They sponsor lectures and plays and raise funds to enable impecunious students to continue their studies. A few years ago they gave \$500 to the victims of an earthquake in Albania. Another young men's society, the Albanian Progressive League of America, was founded in Boston in 1936 under the auspices of the International Institute. Most of its members are American-born Albanians under thirty years of age.

Of the scores of Albanian societies which have come into existence at one time or another, only a small percentage have survived. Many were doomed from their very inception. The *Albanian Messenger* of September 14, 1936 gave an explanation for the brief life of most Albanian associations. "First, because it is well known that when some persons are handed the leadership of a given society, . . . they have broken the rules and regulations of the society and have followed a course of action which only satisfies the whims and wishes of their personal friends. . . . Secondly, as soon as any society is formed in a colony that is well on the way to progress, there are some persons who, instead of supporting it and making it powerful, form another society with the same purpose and with the aim of destroying the first one by taking members away from it. . . . Thus it is that when some new society . . . is in the process of being formed it meets difficulties . . . from the Albanians who say 'We are tired of the past societies—why bother us with new ones?'"

4. *Contemporary Albanian Newspapers*

At the present time three Albanian newspapers are published

in the United States. All of them are political organs and all of them, by their limited circulation, testify to the prevailing disaffection of the mass of American Albanians from those who aspire to be their spokesmen. Two of the papers, *Dielli* and *Bota*, appear in Boston; the third, also called *Dielli*, has its headquarters in Detroit. All three support Zog and his regime.

The Boston *Dielli*, a weekly, is regarded by the Albanians here as indirectly subsidized by the Albanian government. Of the seven hundred papers printed each week, two hundred go to Albania, where they are distributed to prefects, subprefects and other officials. It is a small, four-page sheet, with very few advertisements. Nearly every issue contains an article contributed by Faik Konitza, Albanian minister to Washington. Since *Dielli* is the organ of Vatra, the members of that body receive it free of charge, but non-members may subscribe. Besides the regular quota of political articles, *Dielli* now prints reviews of Albanian books. Its subscribers are scattered throughout the United States. Most of the subscriptions come from Maine, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and parts of the West.

Bota, founded in March 1936, when George Prifti, Albanian honorary consul in Boston, foreclosed Vatra's mortgage, resembles *Dielli* in many ways. While slightly larger in format than *Dielli*, *Bota* contains the same number of pages and is issued semi-monthly. Mr. Prifti, its owner and editor, features occasional photographs of King Zog and American Albanian students. Despite these attractions and somewhat more advertising than *Dielli*, *Bota* has not been received with favor. Many Albanians resent Prifti's foreclosure of the Vatra property, which they regarded as belonging in common to all Albanians. The paper tries to cater to the younger generation by printing many articles in English. Articles written by Stephen Peters, a Harvard-trained man now teaching in the normal school at Elbasan, Albania, are highlights in an otherwise prosaic paper. The paper has about five hundred subscribers, who pay an annual subscription fee of \$3.

The *Dielli* of Detroit, similar to its Boston rival, is a four-page semi-monthly. Owing to lack of funds, this organ of the Detroit Vatra has been forced to suspend publication during the past few months, and its future is doubtful. Like most of the other American Albanian papers, its policy is vehemently pro-Zog and pro-Italian. The Detroit *Dielli* is, however, opposed to Faik Konitza for his interference in the affairs of Vatra.

In July 1938, Boston saw the birth of another Albanian newspaper, *Demokratia*, which was dedicated to a program of "Peace, Freedom, Democracy, Work, and a High Standard of Living." This paper, with Arthur Tashko, a former follower of Bishop Fan S. Noli, as its editor, was supported by a small group of Albanian liberals. It was the second Albanian paper of its kind to appear in Massachusetts, Bishop Noli's *Republika*, which was published from 1930 to 1932, being its prototype. *Demokratia*, however, was violently opposed to Bishop Noli's policy and characterized him as fascist. Having failed in its efforts to interest the average Albanian in democratic policies and problems, it ceased publication after a few issues.

Among all the Albanian newspapers that have been published in America, the only one that has generally steered clear of politics was *Lajmetari Shqipetar* (*Albanian Messenger*), a Worcester bi-weekly with a "purely social, ethical, and educational program." Founded by Peter Kolonia in 1934, the *Albanian Messenger* ceased publication in June 1937. Its editor boasted of a circulation of sixteen hundred copies, distributed in the United States, Rumania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, and South America.

Two or three newspapers published in Albania are sporadically read in this country. Of these *Drita* (Light) and *Shtypi* (Press) are both printed daily at Tirana. The latter is overtly pro-Italian. Both papers are sent regularly to the Albanian consulate and sometimes to other American Albanians. In format, these publications resemble American Albanian papers. Both have the usual four pages, but the Albanian dailies can boast of "ads" and more

pictures. Photographs of the royal family and other Albanian personages and glimpses of Albanian scenery figure prominently in their pages.

5. *The Arts Among the Albanians*

LITERATURE

The first literary ventures in the Albanian language were made by the Albanian colony that settled in Italy in the fifteenth century, after the Turks had conquered the homeland. Mostly religious tracts, these early writings are important not for their literary value but because they provided a basis for later developments. The oldest document in Albanian is a baptismal formula consisting of a single short sentence written apparently in 1462 by the Archbishop of Durazzo, Paul Engelli. The manuscript is now preserved in a library in Florence.

Another early document is a memorandum by Arnold Von Harff, a German who in 1497, after having traveled in Albania for several years, listed the twenty-eight Albanian words which he had found most essential. This leaflet is written in Gheg, or the north Albanian dialect, but is quite comprehensible to the Tosks of the south. Towards the end of the 15th century a religious tract was produced in the southern dialect, with the title *The Morning Bible of Easter*; the original manuscript is in the Ambrosian Library of Milan.

About the year 1555, there appeared what is thought to be the first book printed in the Albanian language. Nothing is known about the author, one Gjon (John) Buzuku, although the text indicates he must have been a Gheg. A compendium of church rituals, the book was first printed in Venice and a copy is preserved in the Vatican Library at Rome. Thirty-seven years later, an Albanian clergyman in Sicily, Luca Matranga, translated into his native language *Dottrina Christiana*, a church catechism by a Spanish Jesuit; this book was republished in 1931. A second *Dottrina Christiana*, similar to that of Matranga but with minor

additions and explanations, was translated in 1618 by Peter Budi. The same author subsequently translated the *Speculum Confessionis* of Father Emerio de Bonis.

In 1635 Franciscus Blanchus published in Rome a Latin-Albanian dictionary containing about five thousand words and considerable information about the Albanian language. It is the first Albanian dictionary that has come to light. In 1685 there appeared in Padua a two-volume work of Peter Bogdani in Albanian and Italian, entitled *De Vita Jesus Christi Salvatoris Mundi*. Thirty-one years later, the first Albanian grammar appeared in Rome, prepared by Francesco Maria da Lecce, a Franciscan father who had lived for a considerable time in north Albania.

Until 1827, however, when Gregory Ghinokastriti, a Greek bishop of Albanian extraction, published his translation of the New Testament, the Albanian language continued to be regarded by outsiders as a peasant jumble. The Turks used to remark that there was no Albanian language: "The Albanian books," they said, "had been eaten up by the cow." The Greeks were equally scornful. Ghinokastriti's translation, published in the Tosk dialect at Corfu, Greece, confounded the slanderers and encouraged the Albanians. It made their language known to world scholars hitherto aware of it only as an insignificant dialect. It proved beyond a doubt that the Albanian language was dynamic, rich in vocabulary, and capable of expressing intricate ideas. The belated Albanian "Renaissance" had begun.

Within ten years an Albanian living in southern Italy, Girolamo de Rada, produced under the title of *Milosaon* a volume of Italo-Albanian lyric poems. De Rada also wrote four romantic novels, each of which portrayed some aspect of life and love among the expatriated Albanians of Italy. Other Italian Albanian writers who contributed to the development of Albanian literature were Giuseppe Schiro (1865-1927), Agostino Ribecco (1867-1928), and Bernardo Bilotta (1843-1918).

In the latter half of the nineteenth century a group of Albanian

writers succeeded in standardizing and unifying their language. As was the case with analogous writings among other submerged nationalities of the Austrian and Turkish empires, their works paved the way for the great nationalist uprising in Albania in the first decade of the present century.

First among these writers was Kostandin Kristoforidhi (1827-1895), who was born in Elbasan in the very heart of Albania. The dialect spoken in Elbasan has been adopted by the present Albanian government in the schools and for official business. Kristoforidhi was educated at a Greek gymnasium in Janina, then a part of the Ottoman Empire. After he had completed his schooling, he was commissioned by the London Bible Society to translate the Old and New Testaments into Albanian. Later he undertook a long journey through Albania to collect words and phrases spoken in different parts of the country. From this material, he compiled a Greek-Albanian dictionary, carefully correlating every word with the locality in which it was used. This important piece of work was posthumously published in 1904. He wrote other treatises dealing with various aspects of the Albanian language, some of which were not published until thirty-five years after his death.

The most influential author the Albanian people has produced was Naim Bey Frasheri (1846-1900), who was born in the little town from which he derived his name. He and his two equally brilliant brothers, Abdul and Sami, were descendants of an impoverished aristocratic family of southern Albania. They became champions of the downtrodden Albanian people and threw themselves into the struggle for its liberation. Naim Frasheri, like Kostandin Kristoforidhi, was educated at the Greek gymnasium in Janina, and early in life began writing in the Albanian language. His voluminous works cover a variety of subjects; they include elementary school books, histories, poetry, and semi-religious philosophical tracts. His greatest work is *Istori e Skënderbeut* (History of Scanderbeg) in verse, comprising more than twelve thousand stanzas in trochaic tetrameter. A German trans-

lation has been made of his *Fletore E Bektashinjet*, a treatise in the philosophy of religion dealing with the Mohammedan *Bektashi* sect, of which Frasheri was a member.

It was Naim Frasheri who introduced into Albania, somewhat tardily, the romantic movement which had swept Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Like the English Lake poets, Frasheri tried to use colloquial language so that uneducated people could grasp its meaning. His works are easily understood and loved by the Albanian peasant. Although he lacks the grandeur of the great classic writers, his influence as a national poet has been immeasurable. In 1937 King Zog brought Frasheri's remains from Istanbul to Albania and erected a monument in recognition of his genius. Naim's brother Sami wrote an encyclopedia in Turkish and several volumes in Albanian, chief among them a history of Albania: *Shqiperia Ch'ka Qene, Ch'eshte E Ch'do Te Jete* (*Albania Past, Present, and Future*).

Other writers followed in the wake of this great national revival. Andon Chakua (1866-1930) produced a collection of lyric poems, legends, and proverbs, under the title *Baba-Tomorri* (*Father Tomorr*). Although he spent the greatest part of his life in Cairo, Chakua never forgot his native land; as a mark of affection he used for a *nom de plume* Chaiupi, the name of a mountain located near his birthplace in southern Albania. During this period, Fr. Gregory Fishta and Fr. Vincent Prennushi, both of the Franciscan Order of the Roman Catholic Church in Scutari, north Albania, endeavored to translate folk tales about Albanian heroes into lyric poetry. Fishta's best known work is *Lahuta E Malesis* (*A Mountain Song*).

But these writings seldom reached the peasants except by word of mouth. The few literate peasants dearly cherished whatever Albanian books they could get hold of, especially those of Naim Frasheri. The volumes were usually hidden away in secret places; at favorable moments the literate peasant would draw forth his books and read aloud to neighbors and friends. In this manner the plots and simple ideas of these books passed into the stock

of Albanian folklore and legend, and some of the peasantry unconsciously maintained some contact with their national literature. Apart from these devious underground channels the Albanian village afforded its inhabitants few chances of becoming acquainted with the masters of their native tongue. Until 1908, when the Turkish government lifted the ban on the native language, there were no schools conducted in Albanian; there were no printing presses. There was, moreover, very little awareness among the peasants that a right was being denied them. Few of the unlettered Albanian immigrants who came to Massachusetts had even felt the first stirrings of a desire to explore their national literature.

While the Massachusetts leaders of the nationalist movement did everything they could to stimulate the reading habit among their countrymen here and abroad, their primary purpose was to disseminate the political propaganda with which they filled their news sheets. Most of the immigrants had a sufficiently hard time keeping up with what their leaders wanted them to know about politics without undertaking any cultural reading. Yet these newspapers, however political they may have been, succeeded in giving their readers some inkling of the rich potentialities of their language, which had been denied them in the Old Country.

One of the leaders who was most impressed by the necessity of giving his countrymen access to works of a broader scope was Bishop Noli. For this purpose he undertook a long series of translations of classical writings into Albanian. He began with an Albanian translation of the Greek church services, the first in history. This was followed by Albanian versions of selections from the *New Testament*; of several Shakespearian dramas, including *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Macbeth*; of two of Ibsen's plays, *The Enemy of the People* and *Lady Ingra of Ostrot*; of the *Rubaiyat*; of Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabelle Lee* and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Scanderbeg*; and of *Don Quixote*.

One of Noli's original works, *Istori e Skënderbeut* (Life of

Scanderbeg), is recognized as the most authoritative biography of the Albanian national hero. It was published in 1921 and has recently been translated into Italian. It includes a fairly comprehensive survey of the social and economic conditions prevailing in fifteenth century Albania. Unwittingly, perhaps, the author reveals his somewhat cynical view of the political ability of his countrymen when he says: "The Albanian hates the foreign conqueror, the foreign oppressor. This, however, does not mean that he knows how to govern himself. He never likes any form of subjugation whether it be heavy or light, whether it originates from within or from without his country. As soon as he has thrown off the foreign conquerors, he turns his energy to combatting the internal oppressors. This results in perpetual internal disunity in the nation, consequently the foreign conqueror is always ready to take advantage of these chaotic conditions. . . ."

Scanderbeg has always been a popular theme for Albanians. In 1923 *Dielli* began to publish, in serial form, James M. Ludlow's *Captain of the Janissaries*, which originally appeared in 1886. It was translated into Albanian by Andon Frasheri, then editor of *Dielli*. Later Vatra published it in book form.

Faik Konitza, a few years before he assumed his diplomatic post in Washington, translated several tales from the *Arabian Nights* under the title *Ne Hien e Hurmave* (In the Shade of the Date Tree). His best piece of work, the one which most adequately demonstrates his flair for devastating satire, is his unfinished *Dr. Gjelpëra Zbulon Renjet e Dramës Se Mamurrasit* (Dr. Needle Exposes the Roots of the Drama at Mamurras), in Albanian, which appeared serially in *Dielli* in 1924. Ostensibly purely fictitious, this story is actually a merciless dissection of Albania's social and economic weaknesses. When Mr. Konitza became affiliated with the Zog regime, the story was discontinued. The following *résumé* gives an idea of the work:

Dr. Needle, an Albanian by birth, has received his doctor's degree in 1920 in Sweden and he decides to visit Albania. It has been his father's ambition to establish a hospital in the homeland.

But Dr. Needle is skeptical about the wisdom of the plan. "Of what use," he ponders, "can one hospital be in Albania where everybody is a sick man? A hospital under these conditions is a home for people who are about to die . . . it is useless to spend this money which could be utilized to educate the people systematically in the fundamental principles of keeping in good health. . . ."

Dr. Needle disembarks at the Albanian port of Durazzo. He glances at the inhabitants, sees a "dark, pale, worn-out, and gloomy people . . . unshaven, uncombed, most likely unwashed, . . . people tired of the world and of themselves, who seem not to be interested in anything about them." "Their tired eyes look but do not see," he thinks. At the customs-house, two ugly individuals ransack his luggage. They find a toothbrush and, as they examine it with their dirty fingers, one of them asks: "What use can this article be?"

"That's to wipe and clean the teeth with," answers the doctor.

The two officers speak to one another in Turkish, "Take care! It may be some devilish thing! . . . Ah, no! It is only some foolishness from France!"

A bug appears on the doctor's white shirt. He picks it up and places it in the hands of one of the customs officers. "Take it," he says, "this is your property."

The customs officer takes it and squeezes it between his thumbs. "*Krak!* I killed it! That devil was a fat one!"

The doctor is told that he has "too many stockings, handkerchiefs, shirts, and collars. One person can do with much less than one fourth of the stuff!" He pays a duty of five napoleons and proceeds towards the door. A policeman stops him and asks, "What's your business in Albania?"

"I am an Albanian and want to visit my country."

"Who pays for your trip?"

"Nobody."

"Tell that to somebody else! How can a man who is not paid bother his head about travel?" The policeman's face darkens.

"Look here, I can afford to travel, for I am a rich man," answers the doctor.

As soon as the customs officer hears this, his voice becomes sweet as honey. "Pardon me, my dear doctor, for the questions which I put to you. They are in the line of duty—mere formalities." Then in a low voice he adds, "Surely you could spare some medicine (meaning money). My wife and children are not well." The doctor gives him fifty lira.

At this moment the indignant policeman addresses the customs officer in Turkish. "You can't pocket that sum! Where is my half?" "Keep quiet, you devil, you'll get yours too!" answers the customs officer in the same language. Then, in Albanian, "Please, take the doctor to the automobile that goes to Tirana. In case there is no place available, make one available!"

The policeman tells the doctor to follow him. No sooner are they outside the door than the policeman tells the doctor, "I am willing to serve you. My wife and children are sick, however, and I wonder whether you could spare some medicine!" The doctor pulls another fifty lira from his wallet.

The policeman invites him to his house to wait till the automobile for Tirana is ready. There he receives some advice intended to help him make his stay in Albania pleasant. "Pay careful attention to what I am about to say to you. In the first place, you must always remember that nobody takes bribes in Albania. . . . In the second place, everybody in Albania wants presents or gifts. . . . Now I ask, in a country where nobody is low enough to take bribes but everybody expects gifts, what is one to do? If you were to give to everybody, you would go broke; not to give to anybody is the height of folly because then not only will your affairs remain at a standstill but complications might follow. For example, you won't be able to get a place to sleep . . . if you have medicines, it would be necessary to 'analyze' them in order to find out if they are pure . . . if you own tools and machines it would be necessary to take them apart because they might conceal something dangerous to the state.

Have you got books? You would have to hand them to a commission, which cannot write its own signature, to have them read. You will never get them back. If perchance you are a doctor your diploma will not be recognized. . . . What is to be done then? I will tell you, you must offer presents to a few. But to whom? That is where I come in. . . . It is necessary that you accept the protection of the underworld spy organization . . . for an honorable and regular fee. Let us say your ambition is to kill a man or a number of men; it is going to cost you sixty napoleons per person. . . . If it is your pleasure to rob or burn some house, the price is. . . ."

Dr. Needle interrupts to say that his ambition is neither to kill nor to rob, but to help the poor people as a doctor.

"In that case, your installments will be only thirty napoleons a year. . . . I will get you in touch with the organization. . . . First you will get in touch with agent NVS, Section II, whose name is Bgn. .el.Kelb. The duty to him will be five napoleons, he will introduce you to the adviser, Lbd. .el. .Katli. . When you are introduced to him, you must at once explain your business; then you must praise Salembosa, and declare to him that you are astounded at the order and progress shown by Albania, and especially at the absence of bribery. . . ."

Undoubtedly Mr. Konitza had read *Gulliver's Travels*. To Albanians familiar with conditions in the homeland every initial and every name in this *roman à clef* has a more than accidental correspondence to the name of some actual person or organization.

The favorite author of the Albanians was the late Fokion Postoli, who once lived in Brockton. After the World War, Postoli returned to Albania, where he died a few years later. All his novels deal with some aspect of Albania's nationalist movement, all have Korcha for their locale and all were first printed in *Dielli* and later re-published in book form in Korcha. His best known works are the two novels *Per Mprojtjen e*

Atdheut (For the Defense of the Fatherland), *Lulja e Kujtimit* (Flower of Memory) and a four-act play, *Detyra e Memes* (A Mother's Duty).

For the Defense of the Fatherland (1921) is a love story that employs the "Cinderella" and "Abie's Irish Rose" themes. The son of a Mohammedan nobleman is saved from death by a poor Christian girl, Nicia, and subsequently falls in love with her. Despite the objections of the boy's parents, the two young lovers are married. The happiness is interrupted by the Balkan wars, when the husband goes away for "the defense of his country." The separation, however, is short and they are reunited to live happily ever after.

Flower of Memory (1924) is also a tale of love and patriotism triumphant. All the Albanian characters are brave and noble-hearted, and the villains are Greeks. A poor but honest youth falls in love with his master's daughter. To perpetuate their love the two plant a rare flower, the "flower of memory." But true love is thwarted by the appearance of a Greek villain. The young hero, forced to flee the country, goes to Bulgaria and then to New England, where he comes into contact with the nationalist movement and becomes an ardent patriot. He volunteers in 1908 to fight for Albania's freedom. Meanwhile his sweetheart's father is kidnaped and he is instrumental in the rescue. As a result of the Young Turk Revolution, Albania wins partial emancipation and the hero and his comrades are received in Korcha like Roman heroes of old.

The Albanian poet, Ramis Harxhi, lived in Massachusetts and New Hampshire during the World War. His sixty-one poems, *Sentiments of My Heart*, were published by the *Dielli* press in 1917, and express the nostalgia of an *émigré*. As soon as the war was over, Harxhi too returned to his native land. When last heard of, he had a government position. Typical of his poetry is his "On My Way to the Country of Immigration," which may be translated as follows:

The sea, the sea, the wide sea
That stretches endlessly like a valley;
I sail through this eternity.
My heart have I left behind
And inside me something is broken,
Something that cries out
"I am broken, broken forever!"

Troubled thoughts of my own sweet country,
My poor ruined country.
What is to happen to my poor people?
My mother, my father, my brother, and my
dear sister.

I have left them behind at sword's point
And run away to America, not my own.

I also dream of the sweet one
Whose name I will not reveal.
Leave me now, do not disturb
My warm and fast tears. . . .

One of the latest literary contributions to be made by an Albanian has come from Miss Nexhmie Zaimi, now a student in New York City. Her *Daughter of the Eagle* (1937), published in English, tells about her childhood experiences in an Albanian clan, about her defiance of parental authority, and about her emigration to this country. The book abounds in idiomatic anecdotes which have retained the Albanian flavor, and is replete with descriptions of the customs peculiar to the people among whom she moved.

A few dictionaries have been compiled to acquaint Americans with the Albanian language and to help Albanians with English. Denis Kambury, one-time editor of *Dielli*, compiled the first English-Albanian dictionary published in this country by an Albanian. C. A. Chekrezi also published an English-Albanian dictionary, which came out in 1923. In 1934, Nelo Drizari, now

a resident of Boston, produced an English-Albanian and Albanian-English dictionary. Both Chekrezi's and Drizari's dictionaries contain prefaces by Faik Konitza. Chekrezi has also written two histories, one in Albanian, *A History of Europe—Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, (1921) and one in English, *Albania, Past and Present* (1919). Another history in English, *Albania, The Master Key to the Near East* (1919) by Christo Dako completes the short list of historical works by Massachusetts Albanians.

Despite the existence of a considerable literature in the Albanian language, the Albanian reading public is very small. Libraries in cities and towns where the largest colonies of Albanians live report that Albanian books rarely leave the shelves. As the Albanian language dies out among the younger generation, it is possible that such books will cease to hold any interest except for antiquarians.

THEATER

The drama, which in western Europe and elsewhere evolved as a form of religious ceremony, struck no roots in Albania. The decadent clergy of the Greek Orthodox Church were too concerned with smothering all signs of an independent Albanian culture to foster such a development. Until the lifting of the ban on the Albanian language, the Turkish authorities would not have permitted the open performance of Albanian plays. And since the theater usually grows up as a collective effort of the community, it is the form of art least fitted to develop underground.

Stagecraft of a sort made its appearance in Albania following the Young Turk Revolution. Subsequent years, however, were so tumultuous that its growth was arrested. The Albanian drama is largely a product of American Albanians. Its repertory is still small; and although a few plays such as Kristo Floki's *Fe e Kombesi* (Religion and Nationality), Mihal Grameno's *Vdekje e Piro*s (Death of Pyrrhus) and Fokion Postoli's *Detyra e Memes* (A Mother's Duty) have been performed repeatedly here and in

the Old Country, they are mediocre both in conception and in technique.

Religion and Nationality is a four-act drama based on the familiar plot wherein a Mohammedan bey falls in love with a Christian girl, who is a servant in his father's household. The background is southern Albania, the time the middle of the nineteenth century. Common nationality proves to be more important than religion and the difference in faith is no barrier to a happy marriage.

Death of Pyrrhus eulogizes the most famous king of the Epirotes, who lived from 318(?) to 272 B. C. As the play opens, the queen and her court are informed that the Albanian army has been victorious in battle but that the king has been killed. The main purpose of the subsequent action is to glorify the king's achievements as warrior and statesman. If one can believe the author, Pyrrhus' rule embodied every conceivable element of democracy. Despite the play's lack of artistic merit, it has attained popularity because of its patriotic theme.

In *A Mother's Duty* Americans will recognize the counterpart of many an old American melodrama: the spotless hero and heroine, the relentless villain, the misunderstanding, the frequent apostrophes to patriotic feeling, and the eventual happy ending are all here. Fokion Postoli has utilized the old formula to good advantage, and like his novels this play is heartily enjoyed by Albanians. Especially popular is the passage uttered by the hero on his return to Albania from America after 1912: "Fall, tears, keep on falling at the sight of Albania, my own country: after ten years away from you, I return to my beloved Albania. Never shall I leave you again, for you are the whole of my being: the Almighty has made you to be far better loved by your sons than any sons have ever loved their country. No matter how far your sons have wandered away from you, no matter how rich and civilized are the countries that receive your sons—they can never forget thy sweetness, thy love. Their yearning for you can

never, never leave them, O Sweet One! How can they forget the green hills that give forth beautiful scents and perfumes! These broad valleys where its rivers follow their course—aren't they the world's best sight! My beloved country, after ten years away from you, I return and find you free—my perpetual dream has come true. May you forever be free, progressive, and happy!"

Despite their crudity these plays never seem to pall upon Albanians. They are performed over and over again in this country.

Fan Noli wrote a three-act drama in 1907 entitled *Israelite dhe Filistine* (Israelites and the Philistines), where he portrays the old conflicts between these two factions. Because the play is more a philosophical discourse than a drama and because it is written in archaic Albanian, it has never been popularly received.

Attempts to establish permanent dramatic societies among Albanians in Worcester, Boston, Natick, and other Massachusetts communities have met with scant success. The first Albanian play to be produced in America, Naim Frasheri's *Besa* (Honor), was presented in Natick in 1911. In 1923 a dramatic group was founded in Boston under the leadership of Faik Konitza; it produced only one play, Shakespeare's *Othello*. A similar group was organized in Worcester in 1923 under the guidance of a Clark University student; this group is still functioning and regularly presents one play a year. Recently it produced Fan Noli's Albanian version of Ibsen's *Enemy of the People*. Since 1932 the Albanian ladies' societies have staged two dramas. A Boston dramatic group, calling itself Aferdita, has presented *Religion and Nationality*. Drita has given two performances of Molière's *Médecin malgré lui*, the first in Boston in 1934 and the second a few months later in Worcester. Few productions of the various Shakespearian dramas now available in Albanian translations have been attempted; it is said that they require more advanced technical equipment than can be provided by amateur groups. Yet the amateurish quality of other productions and the absence

of any really sustained effort to create a permanent audience for an Albanian theater have not prevented the Albanians from flocking to whatever plays have been presented.

MUSIC

Music among the Albanians found expression in the melodies accompanying the folk tales and legends of the people. All poems are called songs (*kenge*) and every poem is set to music by the peasants. These songs are usually variations upon heroic and amorous themes. The songs about love often approach the bawdy; it is a curious paradox that whereas any derogatory remark about a particular woman is considered ample cause for a blood feud, slurs upon women in the abstract are readily condoned in songs. Some of the songs are unknown outside the town or locality in which they originated; others have been recorded and are sung all over Albania. The scores of many of the published Albanian songs were written by Mr. Thomas Nassi, conductor of the Cape Cod Philharmonic Society.

Mr. Nassi was the first person to make a serious attempt to compose purely Albanian music. His interest in the music of his countrymen dates from March 1915, when he organized the first Albanian string orchestra, Perparimi, in Natick. Four months later he formed the Boston Albanian Mandolin Club. Toward the end of the same year these two groups were united to form the Dodona orchestra, which had about 40 players. Dodona gave its first concert in Franklin Memorial Hall in Boston to an audience of 800. A year later the Vatra Band was organized in Worcester, with 37 members. Soon Vatra and Dodona were giving concerts in many New England cities.

During the War, when Mr. Nassi and some of the musicians were called to military service, the orchestras were disbanded. But after the Armistice, the Vatra band was reorganized and went to Albania, where under the leadership of Mr. Nassi it gave concerts in every city in the country. It was then summoned

to the capital to be the official government band, eventually the royal band of Albania.

While in Albania in 1920 Mr. Nassi heard peasants sing their songs and he transcribed them. He found that each folk song has a simple central theme which is repeated and developed as the singing progresses. The theme is started by the tenor (or soprano) alone. When he has finished the first passage and is beginning the second, the baritone joins in by beginning the first passage over again. The baritone follows the tenor, but never overtakes him, while the rest of the group support the theme with a bass monotone, which increases steadily in volume as it harmonizes with the ever changing chord provided by the two singers. Some of the better known folk songs which Mr. Nassi has recorded are: *Bilbili* (Nightingale); *Fyelli i Bariut* (Shepherd's Flute); *O moj ti me syt' e zinj* (Oh thou Black Eyes); *Kenga e Mullirit* (Mill Song); *Katre Valle* (Suite of Albanian Folk Dances); *Prape Ardhi Vera* (Spring Returns); and *Eqare* (Lament). These songs are now sung by Albanians everywhere.

After 1908, when the ban on the Albanian language was lifted, many patriotic poems began to circulate in Albania. Most of them are descriptive lyrics written in praise of Albania, its mountains, rivers, and valleys. Two of the most famous are *Hymni Flamurit* (Flag Hymn) and *Hymni Mbretnor* (Royal Hymn).

Mr. Nassi played a prominent part in the development of liturgical music among Massachusetts Albanians. He helped found the original Albanian Choral Society, which in 1917 sang the first Albanian mass with music adapted from the Byzantine by Mr. Nassi and with text by Bishop Noli. Shortly afterwards splendid choral societies were organized in Southbridge and Worcester. The work was interrupted by the war. But during the last five years liturgical music has once again made rapid progress in Massachusetts. It has excellent possibilities of continued growth, because of the boundless energy of Bishop Noli, who in June 1938 received a degree from the New England Conservatory of Music.

Albanians as a rule look with disdain upon the professional musician. In Albania it is only gypsies who play for dancing. These gypsy musicians are paid no stipulated fee; coins are simply tossed to them as the dancers pass by. Often a tidy sum is netted in this way. The custom has been imported into Massachusetts; and in pre-depression days musicians at Albanian parties were known to collect anywhere from sixty to eighty dollars in a single afternoon or evening. One of the best known of these musicians was the late Spiro Damatin, who used to chuckle as he admitted his willingness to be a "gypsy" for Albanian dancers. His music was provided by himself and his two sons. He played the clarinet, when he was not singing a verse or two of some homeland popular favorite. One of his sons played a lute, while with his feet he pumped a small portable organ which, with two keys plugged down, emitted a droning bass sound. The other son played a violin.

FOLK TALES

Albanians in Massachusetts have not forgotten the innumerable anecdotes which served their ancestors as the vehicles of homely wisdom, superstition, and humor. Many of them are not uniquely Albanian, but form part of the folklore of the Near East. Often they point a moral. A stock figure of the stories is Nastradin *Hodja*, a legendary Mohammedan priest and village wise-man, whose exploits are retold with countless variations. In the folklore of the Near East Nastradin *Hodja* plays a role not unlike that of Till Eulenspiegel in German tales. A few of the more popular anecdotes are here summarized.

The *Hodja* once visited his neighbor and borrowed a kettle. After a week or so he returned with a small pail in his hands. Handing the pail to his neighbor, he explained:

"Your kettle just gave birth to this pail, and as I am a most honest person I would not deprive you (God forbid that I should dishonor myself) of this gift from heaven! Here, take this child

—I mean this pail! May you live as long as the mountains, and I bid you good day, sir!”

The neighbor was too thunderstruck to make any rejoinder. The miracle of miracles had just taken place!

But there was still another miracle to come. For a long time the *Hodja* made himself scarce. The neighbor began to wonder what had happened to his kettle, and finally decided to visit the *Hodja* to find out.

“I want some news about my kettle, my most esteemed *Hodja*. I am in need of it and I don’t want to wait till you announce that it has given birth to twins.”

“Oh, the kettle! I have sad news for you, my most neighborly of neighbors: the kettle died and I had to bury it!”

At another time, the *Hodja* went to the barber’s for a shave. The barber was about as dexterous as most members of his craft in Albania; at every wave of his razor he picked up a bit of cotton and placed it on the cheek to cover a cut. Each time he would say:

“Pardon, a thousand pardons! It must have been a pimple.”

This went on for some time while the *Hodja* did his best to restrain himself. When the barber was half way through, the *Hodja* stopped him:

“Hold on, my dear fellow!” he exclaimed. “You have planted enough cotton on one side! I have decided to plant wool on the other side, to make a jacket!”

The *Hodja* on one occasion had incurred terrible debts. Finding it more and more difficult to dodge his creditors, he finally decided to stop appearing in public and to hide in his house. Soon his house was under surveillance. The *Hodja*, growing restive, said to his wife: “Wife, this is outrageous! A man is not even allowed to bury himself alive. You might go out and tell those fellows not to waste any more time, for I have just died.”

The worthy woman did as she was told, but the doubting cred-

itors wanted to know definitely when he was to be buried. Against her protests they insisted on carrying the coffin to the grave. Willy-nilly, the *Hodja* soon found himself in a coffin. The road over which the creditors carried the body was very rough, and the poor *Hodja* was badly jounced. At length, in exasperation, he pushed up the lid and shouted to his creditors: "If I were alive, I should certainly have had sense enough not to choose this damnation of a road to carry a dead man to his grave."

Once the *Hodja* was visited by a fellow townsman.

"Would you please let me use your donkey for a most urgent matter, my dear *Hodja*?" asked the townsman.

"Most certainly!" answered the *Hodja*, "but my servant went to the city and took the donkey with him. I am very sorry not to be able to accommodate you, my dear townsman. Remember my most urgent desire to do so, however."

Hardly had the *Hodja* finished speaking when the donkey in the stable brayed loudly.

"Do you hear?" nervously resumed the *Hodja*. "My donkey is in the stables, my most esteemed townsman. I am sure he must be sick—that is why my servant has not taken the creature with him."

At one stage of his career the *Hodja* found himself too popular; people were always visiting him.

"Wife," he said, "remember I am not at home to anyone until I catch up with my sleep."

Neighbors, however, continued to knock at his door. The wife did her best to carry out her husband's wishes—but to no avail. Visitors began to gather around the house in huge numbers and raised the devil of a racket. Finally the *Hodja* opened his bedroom window and put his head out:

"Look here, honest folk, don't waste your time and my time—I know that the *Hodja* is not at home!"

On the occasion of a public festivity the *Hodja* discovered to his consternation that nobody had thought of giving him an honorable place at the table. He left the feast in disgust. Once home, he remembered a marvelous cloak hanging in his closet. He donned it, and returned to the festivities. The other guests, dazzled by the splendor of the cloak, conducted him to the most honored and coveted place at the table.

While he was eating, the *Hodja* hid a roast duck under the cloak, and a dinner companion heard him murmur:

"Eat, my worthy cloak, for it is truly on your account that I am honored!"

One evening three men began to shout and quarrel with one another in front of the *Hodja's* house. His wife, greatly disturbed by the racket, went up to her husband's bedside and asked him to go find out what was going on. The *Hodja* put on his splendid cloak and went out into the street. Shortly he returned without his cloak. When his wife asked him what the noise was about, he answered, "Oh nothing—nothing—they were quarreling about my cloak!" The squabble had served as a ruse to bring the *Hodja* with his fine cloak out of the house.

A man once boasted a great deal that he was as clever as the *Hodja*. "The *Hodja* may fool you, but never me," he declared, and everyone jeered. Confidently, he set about looking for the *Hodja* in the market place. When he found him, he challenged him thus: "Your reputation as a clever fellow is great, O *Hodja*! But I have in mind to match my cleverness with yours. Please try to fool me in something!"

"If you are really as clever as you say you are and as you appear to be, I could not possibly match my wits with yours," replied the *Hodja*.

"Why not?" asked the boaster.

"Because with a very clever man I must equip myself with my

book of lies which I have left at home—a day's journey from here."

"Please take my horse and go and fetch it. I have in mind to try my wits with you for once!"

"It couldn't be done, for I have some business to dispatch for a couple of days. I am negotiating with merchant Vasili for a loan of ten Turkish pounds."

"If I were to extend you the loan, would you go?" Pulling ten Turkish pounds from his pocket, he handed it to the *Hodja*.

"Well, I don't know, I have other business—w-e-l-l."

"Oh come, do not refuse me."

"Well then, yes!" Jumping on the fool's horse, the *Hodja* said to the victim, "Wait for me at Vasili's. I will be back soon, for I have urgent affairs to attend to." With these words, he vanished. The victim waited for days and days. Finally becoming impatient, he told Vasili about the affair, adding, "Now I can see clearly that the *Hodja* is afraid to match his wits with me. Besides he is no man of his word." Merchant Vasili looked at him dumb-foundedly and exclaimed, "You fool! You do not even see when you have been outwitted!"

The *Hodja* tells an anecdote in his own words: "I take my gun which has no handle and no trigger and go hunting. I come to a large, a very large, forest which has only three trees. On these trees there are three pigeons. Two fly away and the third disappears, but I kill the three of them. I put them on my shoulder and make straight for a big, a very big, town of three houses—two in ruins and one roofless. In these three houses live three old ladies—two of them blind and one without eyesight. I greet one of them:

"Have you got a pot to boil my pigeons in?"

"Certainly," she answers, "we have three. Two are broken and one has no bottom."

I boil my pigeons—but my pigeons disappear and only the water is left. This is how I do things!"

A peasant was once unable to find his cow. Certain that some scoundrel had stolen it, he called the village men together and announced the sad news.

"Never has our village been dishonored before. I beg you to find the culprit."

The peasants deliberated for a long time about ways and means. Finally they decided to plead with the guilty party, promising him that if he were to reveal his identity no punishment would be meted out. As an added inducement they promised him half the cow's value. These tactics met with no results.

Finally one of the peasants announced that St. Nicholas had given him the power to discover the thief.

"He who stole the money, my dear villagers, has a bee in his cap!" he cried.

The thief on hearing these words impulsively thrust his hand towards his cap and thus revealed his identity.

"Come, come, my dear fellow, produce the cow!" exclaimed the peasants all together. "We are the bees and we know you stole the honey!"

Dinnertime in a school: a roast chicken was set before the teacher. The pupils, aware of his intention to keep the whole of the delicacy for himself, watched him with envious eyes. When he had half finished his feast, he decided to take an after-dinner walk, and in order to forestall any poaching on his meal during his absence, he announced:

"I have discovered that the rest of my chicken is poisoned. I must warn you all to avoid it."

No sooner had he departed when a fruit peddler passed by. One student, whose eyes had been particularly excited while the teacher was occupied with the chicken, called the peddler in and said to him: "Look here, my good man, I have a wonderful knife that I would like to exchange for a few apples." Picking up the knife left on the teacher's plate, he handed it over to the

peddler. The latter had an eye for values, gave the student a few apples, and happily whistled his way out.

The apples only whetted the pupil's appetite. He went for the chicken, and made short work of it.

When the teacher returned and discovered that the chicken was gone, he angrily demanded that the culprit reveal himself.

The guilty student pushed himself forward and answered, "I did it, my dear teacher. But don't blame me, blame the apples."

"What have apples got to do with it?" asked the teacher furiously.

"Delicious apples have a lot to do with my undoing. Let me explain. A fruit peddler passed by with some most enticing apples. I took your knife from the plate and. . ."

"I see!" thundered the teacher.

"Well, your knife was gone. The enjoyment did not last long, however. My soul got black at the crime I had committed against my wonderful teacher. So. . ."

"I am not interested in your wretched soul and don't you 'wonderful' me! What about the chicken?"

"The poisoned chicken, you mean? Well, I decided to eat it up. . ."

"You ate it up? One crime wasn't enough, you had to commit a second!"

"Pardon me, my most excellent teacher, I never was interested in the taste of the chicken. The reason why I ate it was to pay the price for my crime, for I could not face you alive. I thought I would rather die than live with such a sin on my soul. . ."

"After you disposed of the knife, which had cost me a goodly sum, you also tackled the chicken! And how did you like it?"

"In order to pay for the sins of my soul, I bravely finished the remains of the chicken, a most bitter taste pervaded my mouth. . . I was patiently waiting for my death. . ."

"Enough!" roared the teacher. He scrutinized the student for a long time. Finally a smile broke out on his face and he said: "Oho, you scoundrel!"

One Petrush was found guilty of stealing a cow from his neighbor, Vasili. Before sentencing him the judge asked him if he had anything to say for himself. Petrush, rising to the occasion, explained his actions in these words:

"Stealing cows, Your Honor, is no simple affair. It exposes me to dangers which you never know in your dignified, but safe, profession. You can always sit calmly and comfortably at your bench; but not so with poor Petrush, who had to take care that the bullets from Vasili's gun did not blow his brains away. Before sentencing me, Your Honor, please recognize my hazards, and give me credit for taking serious risks. The honorable judge gets his salary regularly without the slightest difficulty or delay. Poor Petrush—his life is made difficult all around. Ah, the hard and uncertain life of a cow-stealer!"

Once a notorious brigand was brought before a *cadi* (judge) and clearly proven to be guilty of a serious crime. Convicted and sentenced to a long term in prison, the criminal shouted defiantly:

"You will not get away with this, O *cadi*! Not for long, not for long!"

In a few days he was approached by a group of the prisoner's brigand friends.

"What is this we hear?" they asked him. "Is it true that you have sentenced our friend to many years in prison?"

"Yes, strangers, it is true. The defendant was found guilty, and justice is now being meted out to him."

"Alas, Your Honor, we are surprised to hear such words from a man of justice like you. He was not tried according to justice, because all the evidence was not before you. We ask you to rehear his case in the light of evidence that you have not heard."

"Most willingly," answered the *cadi*, "I will always reconsider a case if one produces new evidence bearing upon it. Well, where is the new evidence in this case?"

"Right in front of you!" snapped the leader of the group. The

judge found himself looking into the barrel of a menacing rifle, which the fellow held less than a foot from his nose. All around him were taunting, sneering faces.

"You murderous dogs!" he shouted. "What kind of evidence is this?"

"What a pity!" came the mocking reply. "The evidence doesn't seem to convince him. And we thought he was an intelligent man. Now, Your Honor, listen. We are asking you to reconsider the matter calmly and sensibly. True, we are thieves and murderers; but, Your Honor, we are always willing to compromise. Our friend wants his freedom, you want your life. So we merely propose that within twenty-four hours you decide to set him free. If you do not—Oh, but do not tempt us, noble *cadi*!"

The judge thought fast, but deeply, for a few minutes. Then he said: "You are right, my dear friends, this new evidence is certainly revealing. It proves to my complete satisfaction that the defendant shouldn't be kept in prison any longer. I have therefore decided to revoke his sentence and to set him free."

"O sensible *cadi*, you see that he is innocent!" shouted the triumphant rascals. "O most sensible, most just, *cadi*!"

"No, not innocent," retorted the judge, "but I do agree that my decision is unjust. I realize now that the just penalty for that prisoner should have been death; and I am sure that he will soon be a dead man if I release him to go about in the company of such wretches as you."

A prosperous peasant was once approached by a neighbor who sought advice and consolation over the loss of a cow. The peasant listened sympathetically, then said calmly and patiently:

"That is indeed too bad. I am heartily sorry to hear that your cow is lost. Something ought to be done about it, of course. And I promise you, my dear neighbor and friend, that I will do everything possible to help you bear your loss. In the meantime, don't excite yourself. With God's will, everything will come out for

the best. I insist that you remain calm and take a manly attitude toward the affair. Cows are found, cows are lost, so it goes with all property. One must learn, however, to maintain calmness. Then losses will turn out to be not so great as they seem. Whatever has happened, my friend, is for the best."

This flow of philosophy was interrupted by the arrival of the speaker's son, who came in to report that one of his own cows was missing.

"What!" shouted he who had counseled calmness in adversity. "One of my cows lost! Impossible, outrageous, incredible! Help! Rouse the village! I won't stand for it! Oh my cow, my cow!"

A *vizier* (premier) came to a provincial judge (*cadi*) whose decisions had won him a reputation for fairness and wisdom.

"I have heard of your fame as a brilliant dispenser of justice," said the *vizier*. "Men in your province have praised your canny sense of justice so highly that I have decided to utilize your services in the trial of a case which has baffled the best judicial minds of our great empire. I beg of you that you do me the honor of presiding over this case."

The provincial judge readily agreed. In due time the case was opened in the imperial court. Lengthy and detailed arguments were offered on both sides, while the *vizier* and other spectators waited in bewildered suspense to hear the famous visitor's decision. Immediately upon the closing of the final argument the judge disappeared for a moment behind his raised bench and, when he showed himself again, he instantly announced his verdict. Although impressed with the decision, the *vizier* was curious over the brief disappearance of his guest; so he made inquiries of an attendant who had been standing behind the bench during the proceedings. He received the astonishing report that while crouched behind the bench, the judge had been shaking dice upon the floor. Outraged, he summoned the *cadi* and demanded an explanation.

"Oh, the dice," answered the visitor, "I will tell you, Your Ex-

cellency. In judicial matters I always use them. They always tell me how to decide."

"You blackguard! You idiotic scoundrel! So that is the way you have acquired your fame! Here we are considering an important matter of state; and you, you cheat, have treated the whole affair as a comedy! You'll pay with your hide for this!"

"Your Excellency, I have a word to say. . . ."

"No more from you! You have just spoken the last word you shall ever be able to speak!"

"But Excellency, please let me continue and explain fully. If Your Excellency wishes to have me punished, I will gladly submit; but I beseech Your Excellency to consider whether it could be humanly possible to be as just as the dice. The empire is full of *cadis* who consider themselves the true embodiment of the true spirit of justice. I say they are but pretenders and fools, Excellency. No one knows what justice really is. I discovered this truth before I began my career in the law. As a *cadi* I refused to be so unjust as to undertake decisions which could rest only upon my intellect and our law books. I resolved to find some other vehicle for arriving at justice. I found this vehicle in the dice. Remember, Your Excellency, the dice never decide impetuously, or sentimentally, or angrily. Promise of wealth and social advancement cannot tempt them in the least. They offer to one and all a fifty-fifty chance of acquittal or conviction. But they cannot be bribed, threatened, or influenced one way or the other by any power under heaven."

For a long time the *vizier* stood wrapped in thought. Finally he said:

"Noblest of *cadis*, I beg your forgiveness for my violent words of a moment ago. Please become my adviser and friend. I want you to remain with me always: you, the most clear-minded dispenser of justice in this whole wide world!"

6. Cuisine

The Albanian cuisine is virtually identical with that of Turkey,

Greece, Armenia, and Syria. The *pilaf*, or rice concoction, of which Albanians are so fond is a Turkish national dish; one finds it on menus wherever one travels in the Near East. So with many other Albanian dishes. Names vary from country to country, but ingredients and mode of preparation remain basically the same.

The Albanians, like many other peoples in the Near East, spend most of their time out of doors, taking shelter only when compelled to by the elements. They have therefore developed a menu of simple dishes which can be easily prepared in the open. Although there are few elaborate dishes, all the food is highly spiced and lavishly bathed in olive oil. The extensive use of olive oil has several explanations. The Christian elements of Albania observe many fast days during the year when meat and butter are forbidden. Moreover, olive oil is cheaper than butter, is easily obtainable throughout the year, and keeps indefinitely.

Not a single dish in the cuisine depends for its excellence upon uncommon ingredients, nor are the recipes difficult to assemble. Flavor is the primary requisite in Albanian cooking. When one samples a *pièce de résistance*, it is easy to understand why the average Albanian considers American culinary achievements dry and tasteless substitutes for his native fare.

Lakror, one of the commonest Albanian dishes, resembles an American pie. To make it, the cook rolls dough or paste to a thin layer, places it in a well-greased tin, and generously anoints it with *gjelle*, or filling. *Gjelle* usually consists of some succulent vegetables, boiled and then finely minced. Since the word *lakror* is derived from the Albanian term for cabbage, that vegetable was perhaps the basis of the original concoction; but other vegetables are frequently used. Those of pungent and penetrating flavor, such as leeks, onions, squash, and spinach, are prime favorites. A more festive *gjelle* may be made of some kind of meat—lamb, beef, or poultry—likewise boiled and finely minced. Whatever the chief ingredients, they are always mixed with boiled milk, eggs, and olive oil or butter. After the filling has been spread upon the pastry and the upper crust added, the whole is

baked in the oven until it is covered with a golden-brown glaze.

A different variety of *lakror* may be made by using cottage cheese in the filling, or by substituting buttermilk for sweet milk. In the latter case, the finished product is known as *dhallanik* (from the word *dhalle*, which means buttermilk). Corn meal is commonly used for *dhallanik*, and a side-dish of sour milk or buttermilk is usually considered a necessary adjunct.

Like most Balkan peoples, Albanians prefer lamb to any other variety of meat. The meat, however, is of secondary importance; it is the sauce, rich, spicy, and plentiful, which excites the appetite. To prepare lamb in Albanian style, one must cut the meat into small portions; place it in a pot with sliced onions and a clove or two of garlic; season freely with salt, pepper and, most important, paprika, without which no Albanian meat dish is allowed to reach the table; add any desired vegetable, water, and butter; and allow the whole to simmer for about two hours. *Chomblek* is such a dish.

Should *chomblek* pall upon the appetite, one might try *tave*, a variety of pot roast, in which sliced beef or lamb, onions, garlic, salt, pepper, and butter are cooked without water for an hour, whereupon sundry vegetables are added and the entire concoction allowed to simmer for an additional sixty minutes. The simplest form of *tave* for the novice is *bostan tave*.

Dollma is a generic term applied to a variety of stuffed dishes, for which cabbage, green peppers, or vine leaves form the covers. The filling is of blended meat, rice, bread, onions, and the inevitable garlic.

Albanians are fond of fish, particularly fried smelts; trout, shellfish, eels, caviar, and snails are considered special delicacies.

Gravy dishes are very popular. Chicken or hamburger floats in such quantities of gravy that any one unfamiliar with Albanian food might mistake it for some strange variety of soup. Albanian gravy is made of flour, butter, salt, pepper, paprika, and water. The hamburger, a combination of beef-steak, ground bread, garlic, potatoes, eggs, pepper, and salt, is not unlike the American

variety, save for the subtlety lent it by spices which make it taste infinitely better to an Albanian.

Another favorite dish is a mush of cornmeal and water, flavored to taste, served with either melted butter or hot milk. This is called either *qachamak* or *memalike*.

Pilaf, in its simplest form, is merely boiled rice, liberally covered with melted butter. By adding other ingredients one transforms *pilaf* into *syltiash*, which resembles rice pudding. For further variety, one may make *pilaf* with *burgull*, a slightly fermented boiled wheat, which in its unfermented state is called *trahan* and has many uses in cooking.

A delicacy much in demand is *kos*, a sort of acidophilous milk, fermented to a point midway between the liquid and the solid state. In preparing *kos*, boiled milk is cooled to a tepid temperature; the *fare* or seed (usually a bit of previously fermented *kos*) is then introduced and thoroughly mixed; the pot containing the precious *kos* is festooned with a cloth, and after two hours have passed, one may imbibe the resulting delicacy to his heart's desire and his stomach's capacity. *Kos* may be churned; if this is done, one has *dhalle*, buttermilk.

A special treat, served only on birthdays and holidays, is *pengish* (pie), made by beating eggs until lemon-colored, combining them with farina, or its Albanian counterpart, and baking the ensemble. After being drenched with a specially prepared syrup, *pengish* is allowed to cool before it is eaten.

Soup is a standard feature of Albanian diet. Of the many kinds commonly served, bean soup is undoubtedly the most popular. To prepare Albanian bean soup, one must boil pea-beans in olive oil or butter, to which salt, pepper, and paprika have been added. Served with hot pickled peppers, preferably green, or pickled tomatoes, and with additional olive oil or melted butter added by each person at his pleasure, this is said to be a dish fit for the gods. Lentils and peas are often used for soup. A vegetable soup, not unlike the American variety, is served occasionally. Noodle or rice soups are served either plain or glorified by the addition

of tiny balls of hamburg steak, prepared with lemon and well beaten eggs, which give them a more festive appearance.

One of the sweets most highly relished by the Albanians is *halva*, a candy made of wheat flour, water, olive oil or butter, and sugar, combined in a brownish mush. The more elaborate varieties of *halva* are usually bought from an importer rather than made at home. *Te matur* and *bakllava*, two of the most common pastry dishes, resemble the napoleons sold in a French *patisserie*. They differ from each other in content: *te matur* is filled with a mixture of butter and syrup judiciously blended, whereas *bakllava* is stuffed with butter and ground walnuts. *Kadaif*, another pastry dish, much like shredded wheat in appearance, is a sweet and tasty concoction baked with butter, ground walnuts, and sugar. Like *te matur* and *bakllava*, *kadaif* is topped off with hot syrup.

The recipe for *kurabie*, an Albanian cookie, may cause an American cook to wrinkle her brow in perplexity, for it contains no liquid whatsoever. However, when the designated quantities of browned flour, eggs, butter, and sugar are combined, baked, and sprinkled freely with confectioners' sugar, there results a delectable morsel that literally melts in the mouth.

Brushtull is a soft yellowish Albanian bread, slightly heavier than western breads. It is made of dough mixed with butter, eggs, and syrup, and thoroughly kneaded before being placed in the oven, where it is kept until a rich reddish-brown crust has formed upon its surface.

The American fritter has its counterpart in *petulla*, for which the *qull* or batter is made of flour, water, and yeast mixed in a thin paste and dropped by spoonfuls into hot olive oil. The finished *petulla* may be eaten plain or, as the majority of Albanians prefer, liberally sprinkled with sugar. A most delicious coffee roll, called *te dredhur*, is made by spreading dough with melted butter, ground walnuts, and syrups, rolling up the whole, jelly-roll fashion, and then baking. The same ingredients differently used make a pie called *koll byrek*.

Since home-made wine is generally served with meals, almost

every household keeps a keg or two on hand for family use. Albanian wine is similar to the dry wine made by Italians. Another Albanian beverage, frequently prepared by members of the group in Massachusetts, is *raki*, a grape gin. A great deal of Turkish coffee is used, and this thick, black, syrupy liquid is always simmering on the stove, sending its fragrance through the house. The chance caller is invariably offered coffee, served in a tiny cup. After the first experience he remembers to avoid the fine grounds which are an integral but undrinkable part of the beverage.

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